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AHP 51 Articles, Perspectives, Profiles, and Reviews

AHP 51

# AHP 51

## Articles, Perspectives, Profiles, and Reviews



# *ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES* 51

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FRONT COVER: Saihua (b. 1946) and her husband (Limuzhunmaa, b. 1942) visit the Chinggis Khan Memorial in the Ordos, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China (September 2017, Limudanzhuu).

BACK COVER: Saihua (b. 1946) has lived all her life in Huzhu Tu (Mongghul, Monguor) Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, China (19 February 2018, Saihua's home, Tughuan Village, Zhinzan).

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*Asian Highlands Perspectives* (AHP) is a trans-disciplinary journal focusing on the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding regions, including the Southeast Asian Massif, Himalayan Massif, the Extended Eastern Himalayas, the Mongolian Plateau, and other contiguous areas. The editors believe that cross-regional commonalities in history, culture, language, and socio-political context invite investigations of an interdisciplinary nature not served by current academic forums. AHP contributes to the regional research agendas of Sinologists, Tibetologists, Mongolists, and South and Southeast Asianists, while also forwarding theoretical discourse on grounded theory, interdisciplinary studies, and collaborative scholarship.

AHP publishes occasional monographs and essay collections both in hardcopy (ISSN 1835-7741) and online (ISSN 1925-6329). The online version is an open access source, freely available at <https://goo.gl/JOeYnq>. The print edition is available to libraries and individuals at-cost through print on demand publisher Lulu.com at <https://goo.gl/rIT9lI>. The journal currently has a core editorial team of four members and a consultative editorial board of twenty-five experts from a variety of disciplines. All submissions to the journal are peer-reviewed by the editorial board and independent, anonymous assessors.

AHP welcomes submissions from a wide range of scholars with an interest in the area. Given the dearth of current knowledge on this culturally complex area, we encourage submissions that contain descriptive accounts of local realities - especially by authors from communities in the Asian Highlands - as well as theory-oriented articles. We publish items of irregular format - long articles, short monographs, photo essays, fiction, auto-ethnography, etc. Authors receive a PDF version of their published work. Potential contributors are encouraged to consult previous issues.



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# ARTICLES

CONSTRUCTING SACRED SPACE: ESTABLISHING RITUAL SPACE  
FOR THE INITIATION OR PROMOTION OF A SHAMAN

Peter Knecht (Nagoya, Japan)

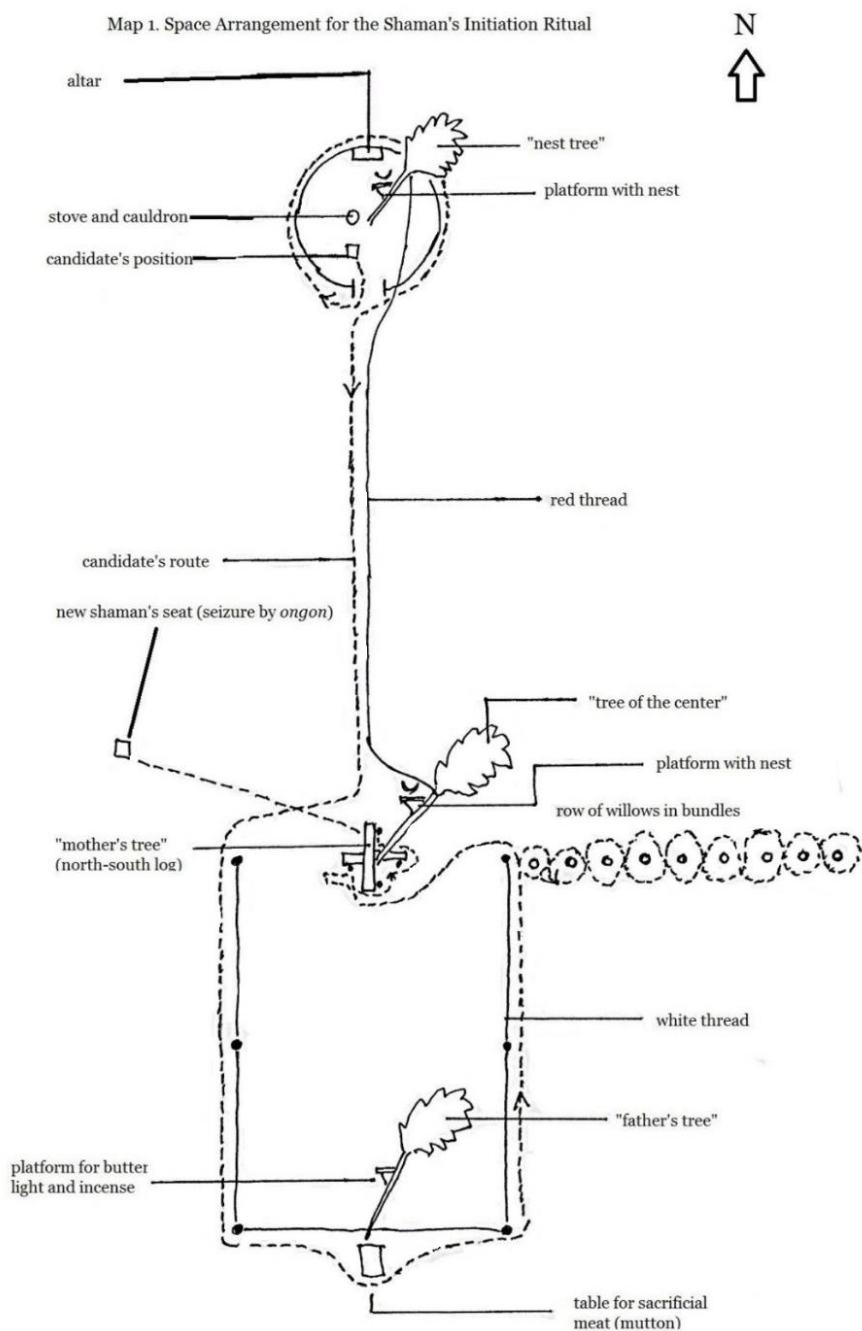
ABSTRACT

Two rituals performed by Mongol shamans of Inner Mongolia, China, in 2003 and 2010 are described. One is an initiation ritual that formally brings a female shaman candidate into contact with her guiding spirit. The ritual makes much use of birth symbolism. The second is a ritual in which an established shaman is promoted to a higher rank that brings increased power. In both rituals, birch trees play a vital role as links between the worlds of spirits and humans. The construction of sacred ritual space makes the interaction between spirit beings and humans visible and at the same time, productive.

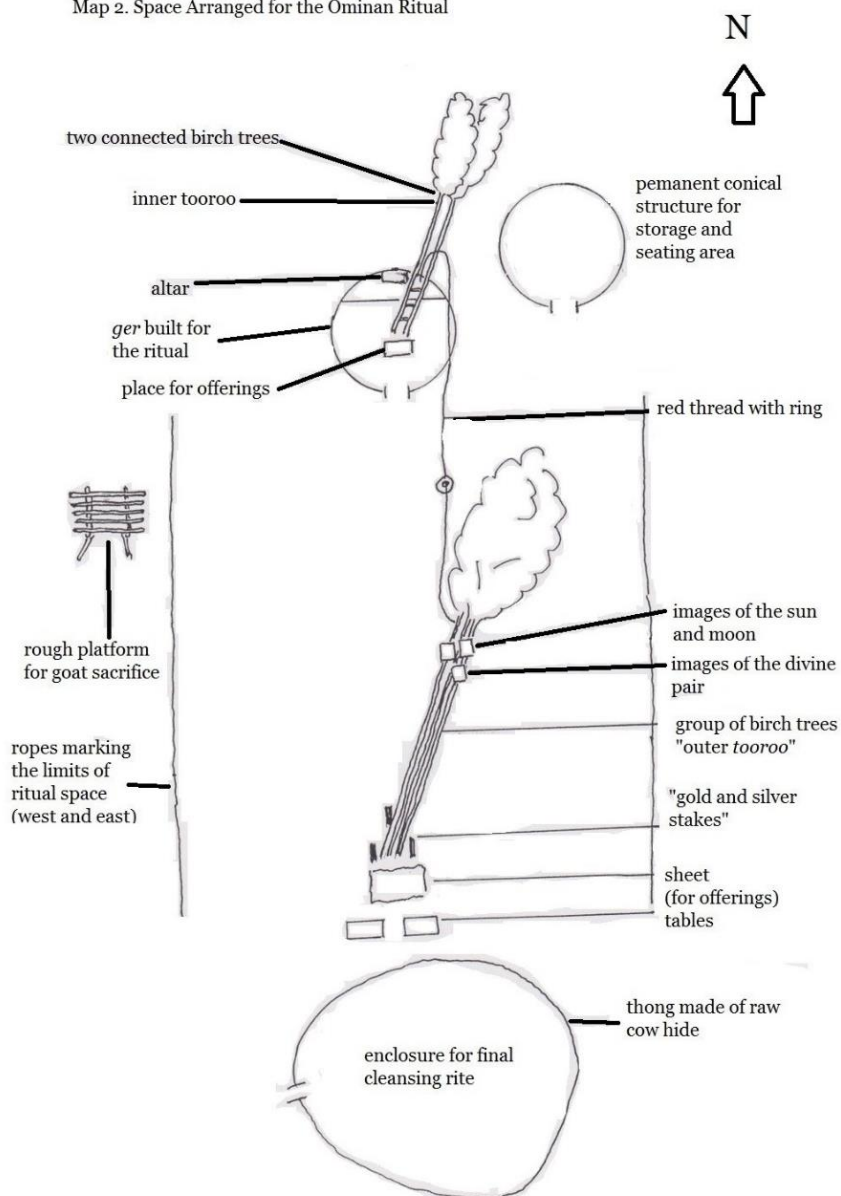
KEYWORDS

birth symbolism, exclusion from sacred space, functions of trees, Mongol shaman (China), ritual space types, shamanic initiation, shaman promotion

Map 1. Space Arrangement for the Shaman's Initiation Ritual



Map 2. Space Arranged for the Ominan Ritual





## INTRODUCTION

This paper describes how a location is established and used for the performance of rituals that are decisive for a shaman's career. The location for ritual use is not a permanent installation. Instead, it is situated within or near people's everyday environment. Nevertheless, it serves as the place where the rituals are performed. The location is temporarily marked off from the rest of the everyday environment. During the rituals, this special area serves as the chosen point where spirits and humans (especially the shamans) can encounter one another. Although I will touch on aspects of the rituals, my focus is on the environment for these rituals, specifically two kinds of rituals, both of which are highly significant in a shaman's career.

One is the initiation ritual that proves the candidate has been chosen by a spirit as a legitimate shaman. The other is a promotion ritual for an established, experienced shaman. In this case, the shaman achieves a new and higher rank. While these two rituals clearly differ, as does the arrangement of the space where they take place, there are certain material items that play an important, similar role in both. Both make use of a new *ger* 'tent of Mongol nomads', a number of birch trees put up at significant locations, and threads and ropes that serve as links between birch trees and *ger*, or as border markers.

Both rituals were performed in what is today Hulunbuir City in northeastern Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (China). The circumstances of shaman activities in the area are quite different from those in Mongolia, on the other side of the border. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) resulted in a drastic break with shamanic tradition in the area and its aftermath does not allow unrestricted shamanic activity. Although since the end of the 1990s, shamans keep gradually appearing, the phenomenon is far from the "proliferation of shamans" described by Ippei Shimamura in his recent publication on shamans in Mongolia (2014:19). In the area discussed in this paper, the number of active shamans is increasing, but they are aware of the political administration's watchful eye on their activities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for calling my attention to *Sámánok. határok nélkül* [Shamans Without Borders] (<https://goo.gl/fLzcPL>).

## BURIAT INITIATION RITUAL

I begin with a description of the special arrangements surrounding the initiation ritual for a young Buriat woman. The ritual was performed at her home in 2003 by her teacher, an Ögeled Mongol woman, whom I shall call "Shaman H" (Knecht 2012:83-89). Shaman H was supported in conducting the ritual by her first disciple, an Evenki man, who had been initiated as a shaman the year before. Neither of these two ritual leaders were Buriat. To conduct an appropriate ritual for the Buriat candidate, Shaman H had gathered relevant information from a Buriat source. Using this information, she drew a sketch showing how the ritual space should be organized. A young man, acting as her assistant, held this sketch as a guide, while supervising the preparations for the ritual to ensure everything was done correctly.

The space designated to be used for the ritual was situated in the large open courtyard extending from the house of the candidate's parents to the northern border of the property (MAP 1). A small adobe house was built in the northwestern corner of this area. It served as the provisional abode for the candidate's *ongod* (pl, ancestral or guiding spirits of the shaman). For the purpose of the ritual, a new Mongol *ger* was put up just a bit east of this house and close to the area's northern border. Inside this *ger*, a table was placed against the northern wall to serve later as an altar for the *ongod* to be enshrined. A stove was installed in the *ger*'s center and next to it a strong birch tree was thrust into the ground. The lower branches of this tree had been cut off leaving only those on the top, which protruded through the smoke hole, the wheel-like opening in the *ger*'s roof.

On an imagined straight line beginning at the *ger*'s altar and continuing through the *ger*'s entrance on the south side into the open space, two more birch trees were put up. They, too, had only their leafy crowns left. Before these tall trees were erected, the bystanders were invited to bind colored ribbons to the branches. The tree erected closer to the *ger* was about ten steps away from it. It was called "Tree of the Center." At the southern end of the imagined center line, about nine steps away from the "Tree of the Center," a third large birch tree was erected - the "Father's Tree." A red cotton thread linked these two trees with one another and further, with the tree in the *ger*. This latter tree

was called "Nest Tree,"<sup>1</sup> because a small platform attached to its trunk held a small nest that contained several eggs made of dough and sheep hair (FIG 1). Another nest of the same kind was placed on a similar platform attached to the "Tree of the Center." Although such a platform was also attached to the south side of the stem of the "Father's Tree," it did not feature a nest. Instead, it featured a burning butter light and incense. Under this last platform, a table was set up for later use when the cooked meat of one of the sheep sacrificed during the ritual was arranged on it.

At the foot of the "Tree of the Center," two birch logs were arranged in a horizontal position parallel to the ground to form a cross whose beams pointed in the four cardinal directions. Bound to short stakes hammered into the ground, the two logs were fixed at about fifty centimeters above ground. The log positioned in the north-south direction on the imagined central line was called the "Mother's Tree" (FIG 2).

The space between the "Tree of the Center" and the "Father's Tree" was left unmarked and open on its north side - the side facing the *ger*. In contrast, this space's eastern, western, and southern borders were clearly marked. The eastern and western borders were each defined by a line of three poles about two meters high. The poles were made from young birch trees whose tops had been capped. They were aligned in two parallel rows, one on the east, and the other on the west side of the central space left open. The poles were linked with one another and with the "Father's Tree" on the south side by a white thread creating a clearly-defined area that left only the northern side open. This arrangement created a space demarcated from the rest of the compound surrounding the house, while orienting the enclosed space towards the new *ger* by leaving the remaining side open towards the north. In fact, as soon as the white thread had been bound to these poles and the "Father's Tree," an announcement was made warning bystanders who might carry a sharp tool such as a knife or suffer from

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<sup>1</sup> "Nest tree" = Buryat *üüre modo*, Halha *üür mod*, Written Mongolian *egüre modun*. (I thank Mátyás Balogh for this and other comments on the Non-English terms in this paper.)

some kind of impurity, such as a death or birth in the family, not to enter this space.

The seriousness of this warning was almost immediately underlined by the appearance of a young shaman who had no function in the forthcoming ritual. Clearly quite intoxicated, he suddenly stumbled into that demarcated area. Immediately some men rushed forth to grab and lead him to a safe place well beyond the ritual area.

The "Tree of the Center" was distinguished by nondescript, small pieces of fur from an otter and a sable. The pieces were fastened to the trunk of the tree just under the small platform holding a nest. I was told that this was done to ward off any evil influences that might be threatening the area.

The three large birch trees standing on the imagined central axis that reached from the "Nest Tree" in the *ger* to the "Father's Tree" at the southern end of the cordoned off section seemed to represent something similar to the spine of a body, namely the main area where the ritual was to be performed.

There was another group of trees of a different kind planted outside of the marked space described above. It was a group of nine bundles of willow twigs whose leaves had been removed (FIG 3). These bundles were set up without roots in a straight line stretching to the east at a right angle to the demarcated area's central line and east of the northernmost pole of the central area. Enough room was left between bundles to allow a person to pass. The nine bundles were described as representing nine divine children - helpers in the shaman's rituals.

By the time this new *ger*, the arrangement of three high birch trees together with a row of bundles made of willow twigs, of a red thread connecting the high trees outside with one another and with the one in the *ger*, and of a white thread cordoning off a special central space from the rest of the area had been completed, the area was ready for the ritual to begin. A brief look at the ritual's main features will now help explain what these preparations mean.

The main ritual began in the new *ger* when the leader, Shaman H, first invited the *ongon*. She then purified the candidate who was standing by the *ger*'s central tree, by dowsing her profusely with hot water taken from a cauldron on the *ger*'s stove. Then the shaman

cleansed and blessed the candidate's new coat that was hanging on a scaffold next to her, in the same way. During the dowsing, the candidate looked to me as if she were on the brink of falling unconscious, but after the purification ritual, she hastily put on her coat and immediately ran out of the *ger*. Once outside, she turned to the right to circle the *ger* one time before running directly under the red thread until she came before the "Tree of the Center." There, she turned to the right and ran all along the outside of the area marked by the white thread. On reaching the right-side end of that circle, she turned to the nine bundles of willow twigs outside of, but close to the main area. She kept running while she crisscrossed the line in two directions, first running toward its far end and then back to its beginning. From there she continued until she reached the crossed logs at the foot of the "Tree of the Center," where she climbed onto the southern half of the log ("Mother's Tree") and took a few steps. Next, she turned to the log placed in an east-west direction, where she first did a few steps on its western section and then on the eastern one. From there she returned to the section of the "Mother's Tree" that pointed to the north. Standing on this log she paused for a few moments before she jumped to the ground (FIG 4). As soon as she was back on the ground she was immediately seized by her *ongon* and fell flat. Her assistant rushed to pick her up and sat her on a chair that has been prepared nearby. At that moment, her *ongon* began to speak and to address those who had earlier asked for a pronouncement.

In this ritual, the candidate did not climb any of the standing trees, but it is noteworthy that after having run the whole course circling the marked area, she paused and stood, although only for a short moment, on the "Mother's Tree," where she met her *ongon*. By standing on that spot she came to stand directly under the red thread that connected the "Mother's Tree" on the outside with the "Nest Tree" inside the *ger* where her journey had begun. The red thread is said to be the road for the *ongon* to travel on. She had begun running at the "Nest Tree" in the *ger* and ended it at the "Mother's Tree" at the foot of the "Tree of the Center" that held another nest. Before she arrived there, she had passed the "Father's Tree" at the south end of the imagined central line and of the marked-off area. It seemed that the candidate had to run a set course that brought her in contact with the

male and female principles represented, respectively, by the "Father's Tree" and the two trees with a nest, but that the decisive moment came when the candidate mounted the "Mother's Tree" log because that is the moment the candidate met her *ongon*. It is, therefore, the moment a new shaman is 'born', in the midst of the marked off area as if this were a "body," after having met the male and female principles that prepared the way for the candidate to meet with her *ongon*. Throughout the candidate's course, the crowd followed her action with intense attention. Once realizing that her course had come to a successful end, the people showed relief and became visibly happy at this birth of a new shaman (FIG 5).

#### DAUR *OMINAN*

Now I turn to the construction of space for another type of ritual. Some central features in this construction, such as a new *ger*, sets of large birch trees, and a demarcated ritual space between them, are similar to the ones I have just described, but they appear in more elaborate circumstances. This ritual is not held for a candidate to become a shaman by experiencing the first formal seizure by an *ongon*. It is a ritual ideally held in intervals of about three years (Humphrey 1996:237) for a well-established shaman who can look back on a successful career and who enjoys the support of economically privileged believers. I will call the shaman for whom the ritual was performed "Shaman S." A Daur, she enjoys much respect from that group. She ordinarily lives with her husband, a Barga Mongol, in the Evenki Autonomous Banner, close to Hailar. The ritual she invited me to witness took place over four days from 11 to 14 August 2010. According to Caroline Humphrey, this kind of ritual, is known in Daur as *ominan*, "the great clan renewal ceremony" (1996:125). Shaman S explained that it was "her group" who provided more than ten sheep and a young cow for the ritual's sacrifices. She did not tell me in detail who the members of "her group" were, but insisted instead that holding this rite would allow her to achieve a higher rank of shaman. Her promotion was then achieved on the last day as the climax of the four days of celebrations.

The *ominan* for Shaman S was celebrated on a large flat bank by the Yimin River. There were already several permanent buildings in the area ordinarily used as tourist lodgings. One new *ger* for use at the ritual had been erected next to these. However, on the occasion of the *ominan*, the permanent buildings were rented for the exclusive use of the shaman's closest guests, in particular those of "her group" who, on the fourth and last day of the celebrations, enjoyed the privilege of being addressed by the *ongon* for an exceptionally long time. The ritual's place was located several hundred meters off the highway and hidden from direct inspection behind large bushes so that neither the buildings nor the new *ger* could be noticed by somebody passing by on the highway. This was probably a significant consideration when the shaman chose this quiet place as the main location for the performance of her *ominan* rituals. When Shaman S invited me to the celebrations she requested that I not bring any person she did not know. This initially caused a small inconvenience, because I could not stay overnight at the site. I needed to commute every day by taxi from my city hotel to the rituals' location. Fortunately, she acknowledged the difficulty and allowed the driver to come into the compound under the condition that the driver would remain in the compound during the day, leaving only in the evening to drive me back to the hotel. I took this to be a sign that the shaman intended to keep the ritual out of public attention, but then I was utterly astonished to notice that a TV crew was recording the whole ritual and that on the last day a large crowd of onlookers and researchers had gathered for the celebration's climax.

There were two different locations related to the rituals of Shaman S. One was an inconspicuous cairn of stones raised on the slight slope of a small hill in the grassland some distance from the main ritual's location and separated from it by the highway (FIG 6). It served as a memorial for the shaman ancestor of Shaman S and as a marker of his *shendan* 'burial place'. When I was allowed to accompany Shaman S to a ritual and we happened to pass the area on the highway, she would get out of the car for a few moments to sprinkle some liquor in the direction of the memorial before continuing the trip. But this time she brought us, namely a few students and myself, to the stone memorial for a formal visit, to pour some liquor and to offer incense.

This happened on the *ominan*'s first day, the day before the main part of the great ritual was scheduled to begin. It was evident that the inconspicuous small ritual was important to her, but during the main ritual, celebrated over the next three days, the memorial did not receive further attention. After this short visit, we dropped in briefly at the ritual's main location to check on the preparations. No further activity seemed to have taken place on that first day.

Although Shaman S was the shaman scheduled to be promoted on the last day of celebrations, she was not directing the rituals. This task was entrusted to an invited leader and her assistant, both of whom were female Daur shamans. They had been expressly invited from Morin Dawa Daur Autonomous Banner to conduct the *ominan* on behalf of Shaman S.

A cursory glance at the site where the rituals were to be performed revealed a basic north-south orientation similar to what has just been described for the initiation ritual (MAP 2). Here, however, two structures were located at the northern border of the ritual area. Although one stood next to the other, they were not identical. One was a new *ger* put up for use at the *ominan*. The other was a permanent structure in the form of a conical tent. The latter showed no particular decoration and did not stand on the chosen area's imagined central line. Instead, it stood slightly removed towards the main *ger*'s backside. It stored supplies, tools to be used for the rituals, clothing for the shamans to change into, and luggage.

Meanwhile, the *ger* was not only placed at the northern head of an imaginary central line, but it also featured certain eye-catching decorations inside and outside. For example, the leafy tops of two large birch trees protruded through the roof opening of the *ger* were readily noticeable from afar. Different from a family's ordinary *ger*, it had no stove in its center. Instead, the two solid trunks of the birch trees stood firmly on the ground where a stove would usually be. Three horizontally attached sticks connected the two trunks creating the shape of a ladder.

The two trees are called the "inner *tooroo*" 'inner ritual trees'. Behind the two tree trunks against the northern lattice wall, an altar was put up where various images and figures of *ongod* were installed.



On the first day of the rituals, curious visitors were allowed to pass freely through the space left between the two central birch tree pillars and the altar to view the decorations and images, but on the last day, Shaman S got very angry when people passed through there. She said that this was not a place for ordinary people. Her reason for saying this became clear later on that last day, when the shamans and their assistants gathered before the *ongod* and Shaman S performed the decisive dance that highlighted the climax of the four-day celebrations. It was a short dance around the two trees, but it was distinguished by her donning the frightening copper mask of Abagaldai, the powerful, fearsome bear spirit. In that moment, she was under the influence of her *ongon* and asked in a brief dialogue with the assisting shamans whether she was worthy to ascend to a higher rank. It was not a question of a shaman's birth but of a promotion, which was understood as the work of the candidate's *ongon*.

The assembled shamans' response was a brief, yet strong sense of rejoicing. Since the rituals had begun she had repeatedly demonstrated in numerous sessions that she was at her *ongon's* disposition and prepared to have the *ongon* speak through her to the believers.

Outside at the southern border of the ritual space a sizeable bunch of nine strong birch trees with their top branches left had been put in place as a group - the "outer *tooroo*." Sa Minna reports that the number of these trees is the same as the number of the leading shaman's generation in her shamanic descent line (Sa 2011:6). At the foot of these trees three short stakes called "golden and silver stakes" are driven into the ground, said to be supporting the trees (FIG 7). On the southern side of this bunch of trees, i.e., on the side farther from the *ger*, drawings of the sun and moon were each hung together with the image of a pair of divine spirits (FIG 8). A red thread linked this "outer *tooroo*" with the "inner *tooroo*" after having passed through the *ger's* roof opening. Outside the thread was decorated with ribbons of different colors and fitted with a movable metal ring.

While the thread itself was described as the road for the *ongod*, the movable ring was explained as serving as a means for an *ongon* to send a message to a shaman. At the foot of the "outer *tooroo*," and again on the side farther from the ritual *ger*, a sheet was first laid out

where people could place their offerings, if they did not prefer to put them at the foot of the "inner *tooroo*." As the rituals proceeded, more and more offerings were brought forth so that tables were installed to hold these as well as the cooked meat of the sacrificed sheep.

The ritual area, where practically all the sessions conducted by various shamans taking part in the celebrations took place, was surrounded by a rope to cordon it off from the wider surroundings that had no ritual significance. It was the area extending between the two kinds of *tooroo* and overarched by the red thread. This area was thus the space where the *ongod* became visibly active in the actions of their servants, the shamans, and for the benefit of the believers.

However, there was also a dark and negative side lurking behind the bright side of the rituals and the security provided by the sacred space. In the afternoon of the second day of the main rituals when the climax gradually neared, an incident of a different nature occurred. During a session, when everybody was intensely watching the movements and listening to the words of the shaman, a woman in the crowd unexpectedly began to tremble violently before suddenly falling to the ground. She rolled around for a few moments until a bystander picked her up and put her on a chair.

One of Shaman S's assistants came and calmed her. The woman's trembling, falling to the ground, and rolling resembled the action of a shaman at the beginning of a session, before the *ongon* began talking. The difference was that the *ongon* who was said to have seized the woman could not speak through her. The reason for this was explained as being because the woman's mother had placed a curse on her daughter, forbidding her from becoming a shaman despite multiple indications that an *ongon* wanted her to become a shaman.

In terms of ritual space, the woman's case is of interest, because her misfortune happened outside of the sacred area reserved for the activities of the *ongod* through their shamans. In other words, the incident indicates that a "tamed seizure" by an *ongon* needs the goodwill of a welcoming person, a shaman, but also a receptive environment, namely an appropriate ritual space.

In another instance of a different character, dark forces and their ability to endanger the smooth procedure of the *ominan*'s rituals made the theme of a ritual action strikingly different from all the other

rituals of the celebrations. In this case, it was not an instantaneous happening, but a planned ritual. It differed strikingly from the other rituals in terms of the time and place of its performance, as well as in the kind of sacrificial victim and the treatment given to the victim's remains.

In principle all activities, primarily the shaman sessions where an *ongon* addressed the ritual's sponsors or others who had asked for a pronouncement, took place in full view of the onlookers during the daytime and clearly within the demarcated ritual space (FIG 9). Only on one occasion was the routine broken. It was in the second day of celebrations in the late afternoon. A roughly assembled platform had been installed just outside of the western side of the ritual area (FIG 10). As sunset approached, the shamans assembled as a group close to the platform. They first sang and beat their drums while facing west, a direction avoided in most of the other rituals. This was in preparation for the offering of a black goat. Ordinarily a black animal was considered unsuitable as a sacrifice at a shaman's ritual (black being an inauspicious color, the color of evil beings). However, in the course of the shamans' actions that evening, a black goat was led out into the cordoned-off main ritual area and brought before Shaman S, who tossed a fistful of rice over it. The animal was then swiftly led away to be slaughtered in an only dimly lightened shack out of general sight and away from the ritual area.

The goat's hide was first fixed to willow sticks before it was put on the rough platform together with the goat's intestines and its cooked meat. When everything was ready, the shamans, led by Shaman S, gathered again at the platform to sing and beat their drums until a few young helpers suddenly rushed to the platform, picked up the goat's hide and intestines in a hurry and ran with them into the dark towards the west, where they threw everything away. Nobody was permitted to follow them to find out where they had thrown the goat's remains.

The black goat might be interpreted as a scapegoat (Delaplace et al. 2014:623), but Shaman S seemed to understand it differently, namely as an offering. She explained that the goat's remains were to satisfy the desire of threatening spirits so that they would not invade

the ritual area and cause disturbances on the following day, the climax of the festivities.

That evening, I was under the impression that the entire goat, meat included, had been thrown away, although I was unsure, because I could not observe some of what was happening. When I later asked Shaman S, she said that the meat in fact had been eaten, but that it had to be eaten outside of the dining hall away from where people usually took their meals. Furthermore, what might be left over had to be thrown away and buried. It could not be taken into a dwelling (see Sa 2011:43-44; for a contrary statement see Somfai Kara et al. 2009:153).

On the last day, all celebrations ended with the participants dancing merrily around the group of trees on the *ger*'s southern side, just outside the ritual space that had seen the shamans' rituals and sessions throughout the festivities. Before people disbanded, the shamans created something like an instant sacred space. They had participants and onlookers gather south of the "outer *tooroo*" and then encircled the whole group with a long thong made of cow-hide. From there, people could leave only through two narrow gates, where Shaman S and the visiting leading shaman dowsed them in an atmosphere of general hilarity with a mixture of warm water, milk, and herbs that was said to be good for their health.

This long series of rituals shows different ways to construct and use ritual space. In the case of the memorial to the shaman's ancestor, there can be a permanent, yet inconspicuous ritual place where the sacredness of space need not be created anew. Space used for the bulk of rituals, however, is constructed as sacred space for the occasion, marked by trees that function as roads of access for the *ongon*. This is identical to the function of the trees in the organization of space for the initiation mentioned in the first example.

Here, however, the trees do not exhibit birth symbolism. There is no nest and no "Father's Tree" or "Mother's Tree." In addition, the separate space created for the black goat's sacrifice and offering underlines belief in the existence of forces threatening the rituals that must be prevented from intruding into the main ritual area. The sacrifice also signifies efforts for the good of the participants through consumption of the goat's meat. A similar positive effect can be achieved by being dowsed by the shamans with a liquid said to be

beneficial for one's health. However, for this to happen, an extra space outside of the ritual space used up to that moment, is constructed on the spot.

#### SPACE: REPRESENTING THE COSMOS

These two types of rituals lend resonance to Humphrey's (1995) observation that Mongol shamanic practice opens a "vision of the cosmos" (135) where "practices are designed to have results" (149). This cosmos is not an image of a world structured in layers; it is a world where humans interact to their benefit with the invisible powers or beings of mother earth and father sky. This aspect finds a particularly strong expression in the initiation ritual for a new shaman. It is also present in a form easily overlooked, in the representations of sun and moon at the outer *tooroo* in the *ominan*. Sacred space is thus constructed in a way that makes this interaction visible as an interaction within sacred space.

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 1. From left to right: "Father's Tree," "Tree of the Center," and "Nest Tree" protruding through the new *ger's* roof (Knecht 2003).



FIG 2. The central structure: "Tree of the Center" with its nest. The log extending toward the right (north) is called "Mother's Tree." The tree at the left margin is the "Father's Tree" with an attached platform for offerings (Knecht 2003).





FIG 3. View of the ritual area looking south. To the left of the "Tree of the Center" and its structure of logs some of the bundles of willow twigs can be noticed (Knecht 2003).



FIG 4. The moment the candidate is about to step on the log called "Mother's Tree" (Knecht 2003).





FIG 5. In front of the "Tree of the Center" after the successful completion of the ritual. Shaman H (left) with the newly initiated Shaman D in her full robes (Knecht 2003).



FIG 6. Shaman S at the *shendan* 'cairn' of her ancestor spirit (Knecht 2010).



FIG 7. The "gold and silver stakes" at the foot of the "outer *tooroo*" (Knecht 2010).





FIG 8. Images of the sun and moon (center) and of divine spirits (left) on the "outer *tooroo*." In the back, the Evenki-type main *ger* for the rituals, with "inner *tooroo*" (Knecht 2010).



FIG 9. Shaman S in front of main *ger* (Knecht 2010).





FIG 10. Ritual area looking south. To the right, outside of it, the platform for the goat sacrifice (Knecht 2010).



## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Buriat (Buryat, Buryaad, Buriad)

Daur (Dawo'er 达斡尔, Dahur)

Evenki (Ewenke 鄂温克, Ewenki, Evenkil)

Hailar, Haila'er 海拉尔

Hulunbuir, Hulunbei'er 呼伦贝尔

nest tree (Buryat *üüre modo*, Halha: *üür mod*, Written Mongolian *egüre modun*)

Ögeled (Öölöd)

ominan (ominaan)

ongod

ongon

shendan

tooroo

Yimin 伊敏

THE FIVE-COLOR THEME IN  
DONGBA SCRIPTURES

Xu Duoduo 许多多 (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)

## ABSTRACT

I compared the two translated versions of *The Advent of Dragons* collected during fieldwork with a Ruke Dongba priest and found many inconsistencies in the same scripture and even within single verses. These inconsistencies may derive from oral composition mechanisms, for example, the aim to adapt the content to metric patterns. These complexities are mainly attested in verses related to the five-color theme, in which the five colors correspond to the mythical creatures and landscape in the five spatial directions. In the formulaic tradition of Dongba Culture, this color-related theme is delivered as a whole message produced by mentioning several keywords. However, the various details involving the keywords do not affect the meaning of the message. Consequently, the flexibilities of the content, highlighted as inconsistencies in the word-by-word translation, leave space for variants in the development of the oral culture and become formularized in various branches of Dongbaism.

## KEYWORDS

Dongba, five-color theme, formularization, inconsistency and variability, Ruke, scripture for the worship of dragons, *Wu Xing*

Dongbaism is a native religion of the Naxi, one of China's fifty-six officially-recognized ethnic groups. The Naxi live on the border between Yunnan and Sichuan provinces in southwest China. The term "Dongbaism" derives from "Dongba" ([toɬmbɑ̃]) (Li Lincan et al. 1972:143), a term for local priests. Dongbaism is used to refer to local worship. The relationship between "Dongbaism" and "Dongba" resembles "Shamanism" and "Shaman." In Chinese, "Dongbaism" is called "Dongba Jiao."

Dongba scriptures are known as oral texts (Li et al. 1972:21; Yu 2009). Available sources of Dongba scripture, such as the one-hundred-volume *Naxi Dongba Guji Yizhu Quanyi* 'Annotated Collection of Ancient Naxi Dongba Scriptures' documented by the Lijiang Dongba Culture Research Institute, present the scriptures with Chinese translation. The fixed text, however, often disguises the unfixed/variable nature of the oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> Actual oral performances show a number of variants that have not been recorded in written texts.<sup>2</sup>

In 2011, I had the opportunity to work with Dongba priests from the Ruke sub-group.<sup>3</sup> I was in charge of recording traditional heritage, including documentation of the local language and their scripture. "Ruke" is the Romanized transcription of the endonym [zɿlqʰəŋ], which has been rendered as "Zher-khin" (Rock 1938), "Ruoka" (Li et al. 1972:125; Li 1984:32), "Ruanke" (He and Guo 1985:40; Guo and He 1999:7), and "Ruka" (Zhong 2010). Ruke people

<sup>1</sup> The idea of variability is considered by many folklorists to be the norm in the folk context, e.g., Hymes (1962:19), Toelken (1979:11), Foley (1991:6-8), Honko (2000:19-20), and Bauman (2004:3-8). In the case of studies on Chinese oral-connected traditions, Bender (2003) and Børdahl and Wan (2010) have offered insights on the interplay between orality and writing. The former is concerned with the Suzhou *pingtan* tradition, while the latter deals with Yangzhou professional storytelling.

<sup>2</sup> Fine (1984:94-95) has similarly pointed out that the written medium could not fully record the live performance.

<sup>3</sup> I participated in the National Social Science Fund Project entitled Zhongguo Xi'nan Diqu Binwei Wenzhi Qiangjiu, Zhengli, yu Yanjiu 'Interpretation and Rescue of Endangered Scripts and Bibliographies in Southwest China' (10&ZD123) advised by Professor Zhao Liming.

have another endonym [nɔ̌ɰzɣ̌ɰ] 'Na people living in lower and warmer places' (from my fieldwork notes).<sup>1</sup>

Ruke Dongba culture is considered a sub-branch of Dongbaism (He 2002:255). Moreover, their glyphs have been classified as an independent category among the common Dongba glyphs in Li et al. (1972). A Dongba priest named Shi Maning cooperated with me in translating this Dongba scripture. In 1974, Shi Maning was born in Youmi Village, which has been transcribed as "Yaomi" in Chinese (Li et al. 1972:125).<sup>2</sup> Youmi Village is one of the settlements of Ruke People, a branch of the Naxi People. A Dongba priest and spiritual leader of the Na people, Shi Maning oversees various ceremonies locally. The worship of deities and ancestors, funerals, misfortune removals, weddings, beam erections, and so on are examples of rituals he leads. He began learning Dongba traditional culture when he was fifteen from his uncle (b. 1947).

One of the Dongba scriptures translated during my fieldwork is *Longwang de Chansheng 'The Advent of Dragons*.<sup>3</sup> In the Dongba religious tradition, dragons called "shu" [ʃv.ɿ] (Li et al. 1972:147) are the gods of nature (Jackson 1979:246, McKhann 1993:103). The scripture is a six-page text written on Dongba paper, 27.5 cm in length and 10.2 cm in height. The chanting of the scripture is a rhythmic prose composition used in the worship of dragons and describes the genesis of the family of dragons, the gods of nature.

During the interviews, I twice recorded the translation of this Dongba scripture with Dongba Shi Maning. The first time, he translated the scripture into Chinese after having recited it paragraph-by-paragraph. The second time, in order to check the pronunciation of each Dongba glyph, he read the scripture word-by-word. He then recited the verses page-by-page.

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<sup>1</sup> Having noticed similar endonyms and languages, Mu (2010:100) proposed a single identity for these ethnic groups - Na Xi Zuqun, a term that means "series of all ethnic groups with the endonym Na." It can thus be rendered as "Na-ish people ethnic group." The suffix "-ish" is used to form adjectives from the nouns, e.g., "British" and "Spanish."

<sup>2</sup> Located in Labo Township, Ninglang County, Yunnan Province.

<sup>3</sup> In the local language, the title is transcribed as [ʃvɯtʰuɿteyɰ]. The three syllables are "dragon," "to arrive," and "to appear," respectively.



The fieldwork notes of this piece highlight the inconsistency and variability of the theme of five colors corresponding to the five spatial directions.

The term "theme" bears close similarity to (in some other folklore theories) "function" (Propp 1968), "motif" (Veselovsky 1913), and "element" (Bédier 1893). In the field of oral tradition studies, Lord's (1938:440) understanding of "theme" as "a subject unit, a group of ideas, regularly employed by a singer" resonates with Parry's definition of formula ("a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea," (1930:80).<sup>1</sup>

The five spatial directions refer to "east," "south," "west," "north," and "center." In the text, five colors are used to describe the subjects located in each of these directions, e.g., the eggs from which the dragon families were incubated from, the dragon families, the mountains, lakes, and rocks. Five colors include "white," "black," "green," "mottled," and "yellow," or, sometimes "red" instead of "yellow."

In this paper, I present my analysis of this issue, with comparison to other versions of Dongba/Daba scriptures that involve related content. Here, "Daba" is the Romanized transcription of the local word for "priest" ([daɪpaɪ]) in the Eastern dialect of the Moso people. The Eastern branch of Dongbaism is called "Dabaism" due to dialectal variations (He 1989:52).

#### INCONSISTENCY IN THE RUKE DONGBA SCRIPTURE *THE ADVENT OF DRAGONS*

In compiling the interlinear translation of *The Advent of Dragons*, I noted inconsistencies both between the two translated narratives (mentioned above) and within individual sentences. Inconsistencies between the two translated narratives refer to the different details given when telling the same story at various times. However, there are also inconsistencies within sentences. For example, a sentence may

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<sup>1</sup> For a general introduction to oral composition theory, see Foley (1988).

start with elements inherent in the four colors, finishing, then, with the transformation of the five streams of these elements. Or, for example, the verse in the thirteenth grid on the first page (labeled as p1-13) is explained as:

The white dew came from the upper side, the black dew came from the lower side, the five streams of dew, with the color of black, white, yellow, and purple, transformed by magic, and three ice columns emerged from the ground.<sup>1</sup>

The second translation reads: "Three drops rained from the sky, three columns of ice emerged from the ground."

Verses of grid p1-13 translated by Dongba Shi Maning:



#### The First Translation



IPA	gʌɿ	nɿɿ	zɿɿ	pʰuɿ	tʰuɿ
Ch.	上	(由)	露	白	到,
En.	up	from	dew	white	come out
IPA	miɿ	nɿɿ	zɿɿ	nɒɿ	tʰuɿ
Ch.	下	(由)	露	黑	到,
En.	down	from	dew	black	come out

<sup>1</sup> In written texts, Dongba scriptures are segmented by grids. Each grid represents a unit of the verses.

IPA	zɪ̃l	pʰuwl	zɪ̃l	noɿ	zɪ̃l
Ch.	露	白	露	黑	露
En.	dew	white	dew	black	dew
IPA	ɕiɿ	zɪ̃l	hæɿ	zɪ̃l	iɿ
Ch.	黄	露	紫	露	连
En.	yellow	dew	purple	dew	conj.
IPA	ŋuɑɿ	mbɑɿ	puwl	paɿ	biɿ
Ch.	五	股	变幻		做
En.	five	stream	transform		do
IPA	dyɿ	dzuɿ	dzuɿ	ɕoɿ	qʰəɿ
Ch.	地	冰	冰	三	柱
En.	ground	ice	ice	three	column
IPA	ɡʌɿ	lɛɿ	zuɿ		
Ch.	上	冒			
En.	up	to emerge			

Trans.     The white dew came from the up-side, and the black dew came from the down-side. The white dew, black dew, yellow dew, purple dew, the five streams of dew, transformed all together. Three ice columns emerged from the ground.

### The Second Translation

Pic.					
IPA	məɿ	paɿ	laɿ	χiɿ	pʰuwl
Ch.	天			雨	白
En.	sky			rain	white

Pic.

IPA      syl      t<sup>h</sup>uɑ̃l      ɖuɿ      n̩iɿ

Ch.      三      滴      一      日


En.      three      drop      one      day

Pic.                  

IPA      ndzæ̃l      dyɿ      dzyɿ      dzyɿ

Ch.      (曾)      地      冰      冰

En.      already      ground      ice      ice

Pic.                              

IPA      syl      q<sup>h</sup>ə̃l      gɿɿ      lɛɿ      zɿɿ

Ch.      三      柱      上      冒

En.      three      column      up      to emerge

Trans.      Three drops rained from the sky and three columns of ice emerged from the ground.

In the first translation, there are five streams of dew, but only four colors of dew are mentioned. This discrepancy also appears in another verse in the same pattern, from p1-5 to p1-7.

Verses of grids p1-5 to p1-7 in the first translation by Dongba Shi Maning:




Pic.







IPA      ɑɿ      ʂiɿ      gɿɿ      n̩iɿ




Ch.      古时候      上      (由)

En.      long ago      up      from

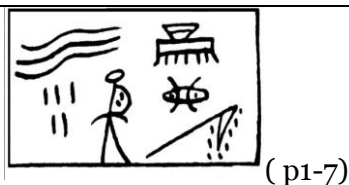
Pic.			
IPA	hẽl	p <sup>h</sup> uɿ	t <sup>h</sup> uɿ
Ch.	风	白	到,
En.	wind	white	come out

Pic.					
IPA	miɿ	nɿɿ	hẽl	naɿ	t <sup>h</sup> uɿ
Ch.	下	(由)	风	黑	到,
En.	down	from	wind	black	come out



Pic.				
IPA	hẽl	p <sup>h</sup> uɿ	hẽl	naɿ
Ch.	风	白	风	黑
En.	wind	white	wind	black

Pic.				
IPA	hẽl	ɛiɿ	hẽl	hẽɿ
Ch.	风	黄	风	紫
En.	wind	yellow	wind	purple



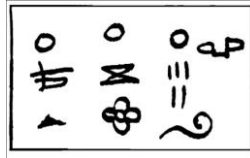
(p1-7)

Pic.			
IPA	hɛ̃l	iŋ	ŋuaŋ
Ch.	风	(连)	五
En.	wind	conj.	five
Pic.			
IPA	puwŋ	paŋ	biŋ
Ch.	变幻		做
En.	transform		do











Trans. Long ago, the white wind came from the up-side, the black wind came from the down-side. The white wind, black wind, yellow wind, purple wind, the five streams of wind transformed all together.

After the transformation, five eggs in various colors, including white, black, yellow, and purple (p1-18), are created. However, according to the latter part of the scripture that describes the incubation of the eggs, the yellow egg is missing and a red egg arises in its place.

Verses of grid p1-18 in the first translation by Dongba Shi Maning:









(p1-18)

Pic.					
IPA	kuɿ	p <sup>h</sup> uɿ	kuɿ	naɿ	kuɿ eiɿ
Ch.	蛋	白	蛋	黑	蛋 黄
En.	egg	white	egg	black	egg yellow
Pic.					
IPA	kuɿ	hɛɿ	(kuɿ	ndzæɿ) <sup>1</sup>	
Ch.	蛋	紫	蛋	彩	
En.	egg	purple	egg	mottled	
Pic.					
IPA	kuɿ	ŋuaɿ	liɿ	t <sup>h</sup> uɿ	
Ch.	蛋	五	粒	到	
En.	egg	five	cl. item	come out	



Trans. The white egg, black egg, yellow egg, purple egg, the mottled egg, the five eggs came out.

The elements participating in the transformation are also different. In the first translation, the elements are dew and ice. In the

<sup>1</sup> The mottled egg was missing when Dongba Shi Maning was reading this paragraph. When he translated these verses into Chinese, he added the mottled egg.

second version, they are rain and ice. This could be due to the variable interpretation of the glyph . According to Li et al. (1972:10), the Dongba glyphs for "rain" and "dew" are similar:  [huɿ] "rain" and  [ndzɿɿɿ] "dew." Moreover, the pictogram , with only one drop from the glyph for "rain," represents "milk" or "dew." Therefore, it is possible that seeing the glyph  "three" in the following verse, the Dongba priest interpreted  as three drops of something. With the similarity between the pictograms for "rain" and "dew," the misinterpretation in the second translation became "three drops of rain." This could possibly be because the Dongba priests were focused on the written text, and paid less attention to the meaning of the verses.

According to the second translation (the glyph-by-glyph explanation), the syntactic structure of the verse expressed by the grid p1-13 differs from the verses with the five streams of elements making transformations from p1-5 to p1-12. The numeral in this verse is three.

Therefore, in the first translation, the interpretation of  as "dew" is probably the original meaning of the glyph, while the numeral following the former verses - "five" - is inconsistent with the written text. Conversely, in the second translation, the interpretation of  as "rain" is likely a variant of the verse, while the numeral "three," used to describe the rain drops, appears to be consistent with the syntactic format shown by the second verse written in this grid.

Inconsistencies and contradictions found in epics have long been a thorny issue in Homeric studies. Lord (1938) proposed the analogy with Slavic oral epic, showing that inconsistencies originated from oral poetry's association of different topics and formulaic structures, i.e., inconsistencies result from a combination of themes and formulas from the singer's repertoire. The song in the singer's mind is "a flexible plan of themes" leading to the fluidity of songs. Therefore, the concept of the stability of a song does not include the singer's varying formulations (Lord 1988:99).

Basing my analysis on my field notes, syntactic parallelism - the rhetoric structure commonly attested in oral poetry (Lord 1988:35) -



may have contributed to the development of variability in reading the verses represented by pictograms. Such a language structure in oral traditions is defined by "the law of Bilateralism (*Le bilatéralisme*)" established by Jousse (1969:29), an English translation of which can be found in Sienaert (1990:96):

Man can only express himself in accordance with his physical structure which is bilateral—left and right, up and down, back and forth—and like his global and manual expression, his verbal expression will tend to be bilateral, to balance symmetrically, following a physical and physiological need for equilibrium.

Such a dyadic worldview has also been attested in anthropological studies, e.g., Du (2002:29).

The rhythm in Dongba oral poems significantly shapes the different versions. In Dongba scriptures, most verses consist of five or seven syllables. Verses with three, nine, or eleven syllables are also used (Li 2015:2). According to my fieldwork observations, the longer verses may be divided into shorter meters more commonly applied in Dongba chanting. For example, the verse based on grid p3-16 in the first translation contains eleven syllables and can be acoustically analyzed through a pattern of seven syllables: 2-2-2-2-1-1-1. The first four meters are semantically connected as an adjective group modifying the description of the dragon, while the last three syllables constitute a phrase. In this case, the omission of the fifth segment (phrase in the structure of "element+color") in the five-color system enables Dongba priests to adapt the verse into a more commonly used meter frame: 2-2-2-2- [...]. In the parentheses, there are odd number of meters. For example, the metric pattern of the verse of grid 1-6 to 1-7 is: 2-2-2-2- [2-2-1-1-1].

The verse of grid p3-16 in the first translation by Dongba Shi Maning:

IPA	nɿŋ	iaŋ	waŋ	iaŋ
Ch.	吉	献	祥	献
En.	luck	to give	auspice	to give

IPA	xuŋ	iaŋ	ŋɛŋ	iaŋ
Ch.	福	献	富	献
En.	fortune	to give	wealth	to give

IPA	ʂuŋ	quŋ	tʰuŋ	
Ch.	龙	一	出	
En.	dragon	one	come out	

Trans.      A dragon giving humans luck, auspiciousness, fortune, and wealth emerges.

Verses of grids p1-6 and p1-7 in the first translation by Dongba Shi Maning:

IPA	hẽŋ	pʰuŋ	hẽŋ	naŋ
Ch.	风	白	风	黑
En.	wind	white	wind	black
IPA	hẽŋ	ɕiŋ	hẽŋ	hẽŋ
Ch.	风	黄	风	紫
En.	wind	yellow	wind	purple

IPA	hẽl	il	ŋuaɭ	mbaɭ
Ch.	风	(连)	五	股
En.	wind	conj.	five	stream
IPA	puɯɭ	paɭ	biɯ	
Ch.	变幻		做	
En.	transform		do	


Trans.      The white wind, black wind, yellow wind, purple wind,  
the five streams of wind transformed all together.

Applying these established mechanisms, priests recite the verses using the rhythmic patterns they prefer or the ones they are more familiar with. Dongba people in turn, are able to understand the story through their cultural background and specific knowledge. During this process, details such as the color representing the south changing from green to yellow and the north indicated by the color green, are insignificant to the tellers/singers and to local audiences. The religious facts thus gain flexibility when reformuled in the priests' oral compositions. Over the long term, the formularized facts could be observed as geographical variations. The five-color system issue is a highlighted case.

Meanwhile, voluntary omission in Dongba scripture leaves space for flexibility in vocal verses. Omission of glyphs is a common phenomenon in Dongba scripture. The written words are generally content words, while those unrepresented through glyphs are function words (Fu 1982:6, Wang 1988:124, Yu 2009:16). Therefore, they can correspond to various versions of oral texts that contain these "keywords."

Moreover, data collected with Dongba Shi Maning also reflect the omission of words in chanting/telling the verses. Since the five-color systems are popular elements in Dongba culture, the fifth object with the color "mottled" is often omitted as a default element after the other four colors are written/told. Such omission can be identified in the first translation of *The Advent of Dragons*, verses in grid p1-15 and

p1-18, as well as in the *Du Sa E Tu de Gushi 'The Story of Du Sa E Tu'* (Li et al. 1978:186).<sup>1</sup> In short, omission of glyphs (written texts) or words (oral compositions) do not influence the transmission of the five-color systems as an entire message. Moreover, accustomed to such omissions, Dongba Shi Maning applied the five-color system of landscape (e.g., mountains, lakes, and rocks in the five directions) to the verses in which the keywords include "white," "black," and "five" (p1-6, p1-7, p1-9, p1-11, p1-13) in the first translation.

The inconsistencies in these verses on the transformation of natural elements show non-fixed correspondences among colors and numerals. Dongba Shi Maning approves his second translated version in order to give reasonable explanations to the scripture's content. In this case, considering both aspects (the meaning of the glyph  and the verse pattern), the verse of the grid p1-13 would be: "Three drops of dew rained from the sky, three ice columns emerged from the ground." This solution is plausible, since Dongba priests do not seek "perfect" versions when they are reciting or chanting the scriptures. However, it is premature to present the translation with a correct variable refined by the interpreter.

Variability and inconsistency in single sentences reconstructed during the process of translating the scripture are specific reflections of the oral style of Dongba scriptures. Furthermore, analysis of the "dew" issue reveals that the first translation (transcribed directly from the oral chants) is closer than the second to the memorized version in each Dongba's individual inventory of formulas. There are two reasons for this. First, the verse represented by grid p1-13 applied the same metrical pattern as the parallel verses before it (e.g.: p1-5 to p1-7, p1-8 to p1-9), which means they were composed according to the same rhythmic mechanism.

Secondly, in the second translation the syntactic pattern of the verse in grid p1-13 appears to vary from the parallel verses that precede it. Such personal repertoires emerge from "habitual usage," while the person using it no longer repeats words or phrases after having

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<sup>1</sup> The Naxi title is transcribed in IPA as [do˥sa˥ŋa˥t˥u˥l̥ʂa˥ldzo˥]. The first four syllables represent the name of the protagonist of the story. The last two syllables mean "story."

acquired them consciously (Lord 1988:36). This concept helps in explaining the inconsistencies of the color issue mentioned here, including the five colors of the basic elements in the transformation process and the eggs as the products of the process.



## THE FIVE-COLOR THEME IN DIFFERENT BRANCHES OF DONGBAISM AND DABAISM

I have discussed possible oral compositional mechanisms contributing to the formation of inconsistencies spotted in the vocal text of the Ruke Dongba scripture *The Advent of Dragons*. An inconsistent issue concerned the color corresponding to the south. In this section, I explore this topic and analyze a cultural fact that also appears inconsistent among Daba and Dongba branches: the five-color theme.


### FIELDWORK DATA

There are two main five-color systems in *The Advent of Dragons*. One system in the beginning of the scripture depicts the generation of the five eggs with the same color of the lake from where they were produced. The five colors are: white (written , pronounced [pʰuŋ]), "black" (  [nɑŋ]), "yellow" (  [ɛiŋ]), "purple"  [hæŋ], and "mottled" [ndzæŋ].<sup>1</sup> In the written text, the fifth color seems to be an undescribed default expression (p1-18). Further in the scripture, the eggs are incubated and different dragon families emerge and, in place of a yellow egg, there is a red one (  [hŋŋ]).

The five colors correspond to the five directions in Dongba culture: east, south, west, north, and center (He 1989:141-142). In the scripture I focus on here, in the east, there are white mountains and

<sup>1</sup> The concept of "mottled" in Dongba glyphs is marked by adding dots. For example,  is the pictogram for "dragon" (p1-2), and  is the glyph representing the "mottled dragon family" (p5-12).

lakes; in the south, there are red mountains and yellow lakes; in the west, there are black mountains and lakes; in the north, there are green



( [hǎŋ]) mountains and lakes; in the center, there are mottled mountains and lakes.<sup>1</sup> The dragon families living in the five places have the same coloration as the mountains there. The yellow egg mentioned in grid p1-18 corresponds to the red egg of the south dragon family (p3-7, p3-8, p3-17). The mountains and lakes in the south are red and yellow, respectively, while the mountains and lakes in the other four directions have a single color.

These two five-color systems (the eggs and the landscape) recur in describing the lake breeding the eggs, the eggs at the origin of dragon families, the mountains and lakes in the five directions, and the dragon families living in the five places along the five directions. Relatively stable factors here include the color white associated with east, the color black associated with the west, green with the north; and mottled with the center. The color associated with the south appears to be unstable.

In another scripture used for the worship of dragons, entitled *Gei Longwang Sayao 'Giving Medicine to Dragons'*,<sup>2</sup> preserved by Dongba Shi Maning, the color of the dragon family in the south is yellow, the mountain in the south is red, and the lake in the south is yellow. The corresponding verse is transcribed in the grids p12-4 and p12-5: "To escort the yellow dragon's sons and daughters to the yellow lake at the foot of the red mountain and cliff in the south."

A paragraph elicited from a Daba scripture, *Xinnian Shaoxiang 'Lighting Incense on the New Year's Arrival'*,<sup>3</sup> may

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<sup>1</sup> In Dongba writing,  is the pictogram for "turquoise" (Li Lincan et al. 1972:112). The color it represents has been translated as "green" by academics, e.g., Li Lincan et al. (1978:186). When translating the former part and the latter part of this Dongba scripture, Dongba Shi Maning gave two Chinese translations for the same glyph , "purple" and "green." According to his description, it refers to "the color of the mountain during sunset." Since it does not really correspond to the Chinese concept of "green," Shi Maning used two words to describe the color.

<sup>2</sup> The title in local language is transcribed [ʂuŋtʂʰiŋkʰuʔ(meŋuʔ)]. The syllables represent "dragon," "medicine," "to put," "kind," and "copula."

<sup>3</sup> The title in local language is [kʰvʌʂiʔsoʔtʂɛŋ]. The four syllables are "year,"

represent another reference to the five-color system related to the five directions. The dialect reflected in the Daba scripture is from the eastern branch of the Naxi language that is coded as ISO 693-3, "nru." The Latin transcription of the endonym of the eastern branch people is Na.<sup>1</sup> This Daba scripture was collected from Daba Tsi'er from Lijiazui Village, Wujiao Township, Muli County, Sichuan Province, during my field trip in September 2011.<sup>2</sup> Significant verses are excerpted below:

nił mił t<sup>h</sup>vł, ıvł p<sup>h</sup>uuł t<sup>h</sup>qł mvł ts<sup>h</sup>ıł,  
To build up shell-white house in the east,

ził ts<sup>h</sup>ıł mił, hãł sıł t<sup>h</sup>qł mvł ts<sup>h</sup>ıł,  
To build up gold-yellow house in the south,

nił mił qvł, ts<sup>h</sup>wæł nqł t<sup>h</sup>qł mvł ts<sup>h</sup>ıł,  
To build up jade-black house in the west,

hŷł qoł loł, ʔwqł zuł t<sup>h</sup>qł mvł ts<sup>h</sup>ıł,  
To build up turquoise-green house in the north,

mvł nuł dił ııł qvł, tsvł tsvł t<sup>h</sup>qł mvł ts<sup>h</sup>ıł.  
To build up diamond-blue house in the center.

According to the lines above, five materials are used to define the buildings' colors in the five directions. In the east, the palace is white as a shell; in the south, yellow as gold; in the west, black as jade; in the north, green as turquoise; and in the center, blue as diamonds.

Based on related data from various scriptures, one would conclude the color combined with the direction south to be yellow since the place where the respective dragon family lives is the yellow

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"new," "incense," and "to light," respectively.



<sup>1</sup> The dialect of Dongba scriptures from Youmi Village, Labo Township, Ninglang County, Yunnan Province is considered an intermediate branch between Naxi and Na.

<sup>2</sup> "Muli County" is the shortened form for "Muli Tibetan Autonomous County" located in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture.

lake at the feet of the red mountain and cliff. The scripture contains two types of five-color systems. One is for the landscape (i.e., mountains and cliffs, lakes, and houses), and the other is for the subjects (i.e., the eggs and the dragon families). In *The Advent of Dragons*, the yellow egg produced after the transformation at the beginning is consistent with this color system. In the latter part, the description of the incubation of the red egg in the south could be due to influences derived from the combination of various five-color systems.

### The Five-Color Theme and *Wu Xing*

Other academic publications suggest that further investigations are needed on this five-color theme issue. For example, in *The Story of Du Sa E Tu* (mentioned above) the color representing the dragon family in the south is green ([hæɿ]) and in the north, the color is yellow ([ʂwɿ]; Li et al. 1978:186). The pronunciation of the local language is provided by Dongba He Cai from Ludian Township, Yulong County, Lijiang, Yunnan Province. The dialect there belongs to the western branch of the Naxi language and it differs from the other two dialects analyzed in this study.

Similarly, in the Dongba Scripture *Hongshui de Gushi* 'The Story of the Flood',<sup>1</sup> there are verses about the act of building columns in the five directions with five materials. The material for the column in the south is turquoise () indicating "green," while the material for the column in the north is gold () indicating "yellow" (Li et al. 1978:30). In other words, the colors related to south and north are opposite to the ones from the data collected during my fieldwork.

In Dongba culture, [ndziɿ wɛɿ wɔɿ syɿ] refers to the five basic elements of the world (Li et al. 1978:115). The first two syllables

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<sup>1</sup> The Naxi title is readable as [ts'oɿmburɿt'uɿ]. The first syllable means "human, nationality," the second means "to migrate," and the third means "to appear." This Dongba cultural term refers to a myth about the origin of human beings. The Chinese title "The Story of the Flood" is given according to the main plot of the story.



represent the ancient name of the five basic elements and may be transcribed "Tsiwe." The third syllable means "five" and the fourth means "type," literally meaning "five types of Tsiwe." It is comparable to the Chinese concept *wu xing* that formed in the late Western Zhou Dynasty (1046-770 BC) (Zuo 1981:1502).<sup>1</sup> Liu (1993) has traced the origin of *wu xing* to the ten-month solar calendar of the Yi. In this paper, I use the Romanized transcription *wu xing* to refer to "[ndziɿ wɛɿ wɑɿ syɿ]."

Rock (1955:117) documents the relationship between the five colors and *wu xing*:

From white thread, wood comes out; from green thread, fire comes out; from black thread, iron comes out; from yellow thread, water comes out; from mottled thread, earth comes out.

Here, the five-color threads were used to make clothes for people who had passed away.

Records on the Dongba *wu xing* can be found in Dongba scriptures and typically feature a frog figure called "Bage" ([ba geq] in Romanized Naxi, [paɿ kaɿ] in IPA (Li et al. 1978:115). In Naxi, the segment "Ba" means "frog," and "ge" means "subject" (Li 1986:216).

This can be seen in Fu's (2012:193-194) analysis of *Bai Bianfu Qijing Ji 'The White Bat's Search for Sacred Books'*.<sup>2</sup> The verses written in grids from 76 to 78 depict how the body parts of the sacred frog correspond to the five directions and to *wu xing*: Frog's Hair - East - Wood, Frog's Blood - South - Fire, Frog's Bone - West - Iron, Frog's Bladder - North - Water, Frog's Flesh - Center - Earth. The five-color system is not mentioned in this recording. *Mosuo zu Zhanbu Qiyuan de Gushi 'The Origin of Moso People's Divination'* in Li et al. (1978:115)

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural concepts such as *wu xing* and the twelve zodiac signs are widely noted in southwest China among various ethnic groups, including the Han and Tibetans. In Dongba culture, the divination figure "Bage" is a visual representation of the combination of *wu xing* and zodiac signs. Designations in the Dongba "Bage" figure and how it is used in divination exhibit both Han and Tibetan influences (He 1989:139-145).

<sup>2</sup> The Naxi title *ad hoc* is transcribed as "[<sup>1</sup>tɕh<sup>3</sup>gu<sup>1</sup>kɔ<sup>3</sup>ʂɔ].". The four syllables represent the notions of "dirt," "to chase," "scripture," and "to seek for," respectively.

has similar content: Frog's Body - East - Wood, Frog's Mouth - South - Fire, Frog's Bone - West - Iron, Frog's Gall Bladder - North - Water, Frog's Meat - Center - Earth.

If we combine the above analysis with the data provided by Rock, the correspondences between the five directions, the five basic elements (*wu xing*), and the five colors are: East - Wood - White, South - Fire - Green, West - Iron - Black, North - Water - Yellow, Center - Earth - Mottled.

FIG 1 is a fresco at the Dongba Culture School in Wumu Village, Baoshan Township, Yulong County that illustrates the five directions and the five-color system. In the picture, an arrow goes through the sacred frog's belly. The frog's head, the frog's tail, the arrow's head, and the arrow's tail are marked with Dongba glyphs meaning south, west, north, and east, respectively. The twelve Zodiac animals distributed evenly around the circle also indicate the border of the four directions. The background is filled according to the colors representing each direction: East - White, South - Green, West - Black, North - Yellow, Center - Blue.

FIG 1. Fresco in the Dongba Culture School in Wumu Village, Baoshan Township, Yulong County, Yunnan Province (January 2011, by Xu Duoduo).



Comparing the five-color theme in Dongba and Daba scriptures and data related to *wu xing* suggests that similarities include the respective colors: east is white, west is black, and for the center is blue (landscape color) or mottled (dragon family's color).

Colors representing south and north display geographical differentiations. Data collected from Daba in Lijiazui Village (Na area, eastern branch of Dongba culture) and Dongba in Youmi Village (intermediate area between Naxi and Na people) show that the south corresponds to yellow (the related material is gold) and the north corresponds to green (the related gem is turquoise). Conversely, data from Rock (1955) and Li et al. (1978) collected in the Lijiang area (Naxi territory, western branch of Dongba culture), state that the south is connected with green and the north is linked to yellow.

#### FORMULARIZED FACTS RELATED TO THE FIVE-COLOR THEME

According to the 'settings' of *wu xing*, the five spatial directions correspond to five elements, and the five elements represent five colors. In other words, apart from being a formulaic expression in oral composition text, the five-color theme is generated from religious cultural elements in which the correspondence among colors and spatial directions should be fixed. However, the correspondences among colors and items appear inconsistent in the analyzed scripture. This reminds the author "to recognize the historical and cultural specificity" and "to explore a broader range of alternatives" (Bauman and Briggs 1990:60).

A significant detail is that the five-color theme did not arise contemporarily with the *wu xing* theme, according to currently available data of Dongba scripture. For example, in the Dongba scripture *'White Bat's Search for Sacred Books*, colors are not mentioned in describing the generation of *wu xing*. The common point of these two themes is that they are both related to the five spatial directions.

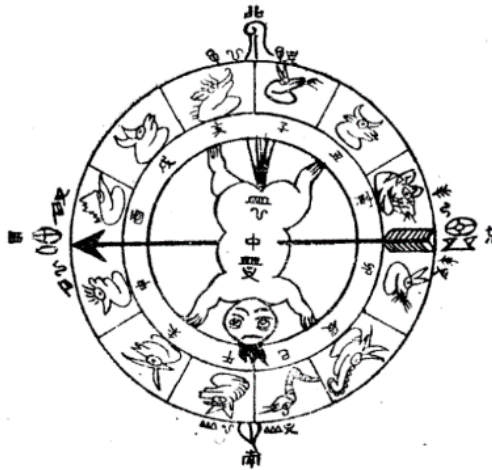
The position of the Naxi frog figure should also be noted. In Wumu Village, the frog's head towards the south (FIG 1) is oriented to the upper point of the circle, while the frog's tail to the north is oriented to the lower point of the circle. However, the frog figure depicted in Li (1986:219) shows the frog's head towards the south is at the lower point, while the frog's tail towards the north is at the upper point. In other words, the circle has been turned 180 degrees.

Due to increased contact with Han people since Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the Dongba west branch living in the Lijiang area was influenced by Han cultural traditions (Jackson 1978:9-13, Awang Qinrao 1993, He 2001:123-126). Such a rotation of the geographical coordinates, from south at the upper point and north at the lower point to the opposite (north at the upper point and south at the lower point), could represent one of the changes derived from Han cultural influence, according to which "north" corresponds to the "upper" direction and "south" to the "lower" one (Li 1997:243).

The geographical coordinates of the eastern Moso and western Moso differ. The eastern branch remains deeply connected with the old tradition, while the western branch has changed, becoming the same as that of the Han people.<sup>1</sup>

The western branch of the scriptures is the major branch of Dongbaism with the highest percentage of population among the different Moso communities (He 1989:56). The different facts attest in the western branch from the five-color theme in the eastern branch of Dongbaism (the Dongbaism of the Ruke people and Dabaism of the Na people) reveal variation in religious content other than dialectal differentiation.

FIG 2. Frog in Li (1986:219).



<sup>1</sup> Scholars have hypothesized that the Bon religion is the origin of Dongbaism (Rock 1952:3-4, Jackson 1978:291, He 1989:41-51).

Based on these two aspects (the common *wu xing* culture in the Sino-Tibetan context and Dongba scriptures), I suggest a possible explanation of the inconsistencies /variations among the combinations of the five-colors, the five directions, and the five basic elements: it is likely that variations are produced by the association of these two themes.

Here is a more detailed reconstruction of the origins and developments of the two patterns. First, the five basic elements and the five spatial directions become a theme and, secondly, the five colors corresponding to the five spatial directions are another theme. Third, in Dongba traditions, the position of the five directions was: up - frog's head - South, down - frog's tail - North, left - arrow's tail - East, right - arrow's head - West. Fourth, the five colors correspond to the five elements originating from the frog: frog's head (where frog's blood emerges) - fire - green, frog's tail (where frog's urine comes out) - water - yellow, arrow's head - iron - black, arrow's tail - wood - white.

Five, with the later influence of Han culture (in which the five directions show to be 180 degrees clockwise rotated), the positions of the frog representing the corresponding directions have also 'turned' in the region of the west branch of Dongbaism, i.e., up - North - frog's tail, down - South - frog's head, left - West - arrow's head, and right - East - arrow's tail. Sixth, when the combination of these two themes is reconstructed, the south at which the frog's head is pointed becomes associated with the color green, while the north where the frog's tail is 'located' corresponds to the color yellow.

Different correspondences among the colors (yellow and green) and the directions (south and north) could represent a kind of confusion or accumulation of different cultural layers (by Dongba priests of various branches). However, this specific phenomenon of the relationship between spatial directions and colors can also be interpreted as a formulaic re-association, since both patterns are unified facts attested within the various branches of Dongbaism. These themes are formularized, i.e., the facts/details of these subjects are narrated through certain formulas. When Dongba priests have accumulated their own inventory of formulas, they express the themes through their personal vernacular habits as whole messages, without thinking word-by-word.

Moreover, these formulas are also familiar to their followers/disciples as well. Regarding the five-color theme, different branches have different variants in their scriptures. Dongba priests, generally focused only on the context of their own branches, and may not know or care about the situation of other branches. Inconsistencies among the colors with the correspondence to numbers and objects derive from the combination of formulas involving different color systems. It is possible to discover that, in oral performance, people do not attempt to look for the "correct" (original) version of the scriptures. However, being involved in the formulaic context of Dongba culture, these color patterns are delivered as a whole message produced by mentioning several keywords. It is possible to affirm that inconsistencies, variability, and mistakes highlighted in the word-by-word translation were insignificant details for Dongba priests during the oral chanting/story telling.

Flexibilities become, in this context, characteristic features produced by religious and cultural concepts elaborated through formulaic mechanisms. The aim of this procedure is to pass down relevant cultural messages through several keywords (useful also according to mnemotechnical aspects/needs), adapting messages into rhythmic patterns by omitting single parts. This process produces variations in different branches of Dongba culture.

## CONCLUSION

This study considers two specific formulaic aspects of the five-color theme in Dongba oral tradition: the five-color theme corresponding to the landscape, e.g., mountains and cliffs, lakes, and houses, in the five spatial directions; and the five-color theme corresponding to the dragon families living along the five spatial directions. The five-color theme correlates with *wu xing*, the five basic elements of the world.

After examining publications on Dongba scriptures and materials on Dongbaism and Dabaism collected during my fieldwork, I have offered a preliminary explanation of particular cases of inconsistency and variability in this oral tradition. This diverges from

the second translation, which is a word-by-word textual restitution strictly conducted according to the Dongba written texts.

The different versions of a specific scripture given by a single Dongba priest could be interpreted according to this principle: each performance in telling/chanting could be considered a new composition based around the keywords (memorized or cued by the written text) of the story. This aspect is similar to the description given by Lord regarding Slavic oral poetry: "Each performance is the specific song, and at the same time it is the generic song" (1988:101).

Despite the differences between the two translations of the Dongba Scripture *The Advent of Dragons*, both textual restitutions are consistent and coherent within themselves. In other words, the published translations of Dongba scriptures, or the fixed versions, compiled according to the glyphs (that function as mnemonic devices), are not the only (right or official) versions. The orally composed verses may show flexibilities, which are adjustments made to the themes (generally widespread structures) shared by Dongba priests.

Variability is associated with the notion of inconsistency defined in Oral Composition Theory. After years of learning and repeating the verses by heart, Dongba priests have refined their own formulaic strategy to tell and interpret the scriptures according to their experience and traditional knowledge. The rhythmic habits, as well as the combination of themes, have both contributed to the inconsistent verses represented by the same glyphs.

Besides formulaic strategies, I have extended the analysis on the correspondences of the five colors and spatial directions to other branches of Dongbaism and Dabaism. This comparison work has revealed a geographical pattern applicable to the texts generated by the five-color theme. Such synchronic differentiation may have derived from contact with neighboring cultures later on stabilized through the formulaic composition.

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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

- Bage 巴格  
*Bai Bianfu Qujing Ji* 白蝙蝠取经记  
 Baoshan 宝山  
 Daba 达巴  
 Dongba 东巴  
 Dongba Jiao 东巴教  
 Dongba Jing 东巴经  
*Du Sa E Tu de Gushi* 都萨峨突的故事  
*Gei Longwang Sayao* 给龙王洒药  
 He Cai 和才  
*Hongshui de Gushi* 洪水的故事  
 Labo 拉伯  
 Liangshan 凉山  
 Lijiang 丽江  
 Lijiazui 利家嘴  
*Longwang de Chansheng* 龙王的产生  
 Ludian 鲁甸  
 Moso 麽些  
*Mosuozu Zhanbu Qiyuan de Gushi* 麽些族占卜起源的故事  
 Muli 木里  
 Na 纳  
 Na Xi Zuqun 纳系族群  
 Naxi 纳西  
*Naxi Dongba Guji Yizhu Quanji* 纳西东巴古籍译注全集  
 Ninglang 宁蒗  
*pingtan* 评弹  
 Ruanke 阮可  
 Ruka 汝卡  
 Ruke 汝可  
 Ruoka 若喀  
 Shi Maning 石玛宁  
 Sichuan 四川  
 Shu 署  
 Suzhou 苏州  
 Tsi'er 次儿

*Wu Xing* 五行

*Wujiao* 屋脚

*Wumu* 吾木

*Xinnian Shaoxiang* 新年烧香

*Yangzhou* 扬州

*Yaomi* 药眯

*Yi* 彝

*Youmi* 油米

*Yulong* 玉龙

*Yunnan* 云南

*Zhao Liming* 赵丽明

*Zhongguo Xi'nan Diqu Binwen Wenzhi Qiangjiu, Zhengli, yu Yanjiu* 中国西南地区濒危文字抢救、整理与研究

## A BRIEF SOCIO-LINGUISTIC SURVEY OF ZHOUQU TIBETAN

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a brief sketch of the socio-linguistic situation of Zhouqu Tibetan, a unique Tibetic variety spoken in Gansu Province, China. The authors used participatory methods to investigate questions of language vitality, domains of language use, language attitudes, and dialectal variation. The results show that: (1) Zhouqu Tibetan is used in all language domains; (2) locals see their language as an integral part of their identity even though they acknowledge that Chinese language proficiency is necessary for employment, education, and healthcare; and (3) locals perceive little in the way of dialectal variation in Zhouqu Tibetan, with only Boyu Village's speech variety being divergent to the point that it impacts intelligibility.

### KEYWORDS

EGIDS, Gansu, participatory methods, Tibetan dialects, Zhouqu Tibetan

## INTRODUCTION

Zhouqu<sup>1</sup> Tibetan is a Tibetic speech variety of China. It is spoken in the central and southern areas of Gansu Province's Zhouqu County, including Guoye, Baleng, Wuping, Chagang, Gongba, Qugaona, and Boyu. It is also quite possibly still spoken in Longnan City's Pingya Tibetan Village and Tielou Tibetan Village.<sup>2</sup> Zhouqu County covers an area of 3,010 square kilometers and lies between the Loess Plateau to the East and the Tibetan Plateau to the West. It has a population of 136,900 people of whom thirty-four percent (46,000) are officially registered as Tibetan.

Zhouqu Tibetan is reported to be a unique variety of Tibetan. Ethnologue classifies Zhouqu Tibetan as a dialect of Choni (ISO 639-3, identifier cda). The Ethnologue lists Choni as a Central Bodish language and does not directly cluster Choni with Amdo, Khams, or the Central varieties of Central Bodish. Tournadre (2014) also does not cluster Zhouqu Tibetan, or Choni, with Amdo, Khams, or Central Tibetan. Even though some other scholars cluster Choni and Zhouqu Tibetan as dialects of Khams, these two speech varieties are often given their own special dialect grouping within Khams, as is found in the *Language Atlas of China* (1988) and Zhang (1996). Despite the differences, all these clustering schemes suggest that Zhouqu Tibetan is a unique speech variety worthy of specific research. This is especially true given that there are reports of rapid Sinicization amongst Tibetans in Zhouqu (Suzuki 2015).

Suzuki (2015) suggests a provisional classification for the Tibetan Dialects found within Zhouqu County. He groups them into the Thewo group in the northwest and the mBrugchu group in the Southeast. These two groupings match the *Zhouqu County Gazette's* proposed dialectal groupings. Suzuki further divides the mBrugchu group, which he says is the authentic form of Zhouqu Tibetan, into two subgroups whose geographical distribution follows the old political

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<sup>1</sup> Except when referencing material that uses Tibetan Wylie, this paper uses Chinese Pinyin for all toponyms and dialect names.

<sup>2</sup> Local sources in Zhouqu report limited use of Zhouqu Tibetan amongst elderly people in these two locations. However, the authors as yet has not traveled to these places to confirm these reports.



boundaries between the areas traditionally controlled by the Princes of Choni and Tanchang. It is in the areas formerly controlled by the Princes of Choni where the research in this paper was primarily conducted.

The primary goal of this survey was to explore Zhouqu Tibetan's language vitality, the domains of its use, locals' attitudes toward this speech variety, and locals' perceptions of dialectal variation. Hence, this paper contributes a basic socio-linguistic sketch of Zhouqu Tibetan that will help to lay groundwork upon which future language documentation and linguistic research can be built. Also, given Suzuki's (2015) report, there is a need to explore how urgent Zhouqu Tibetan's language documentation needs are.

This survey seeks to answer the following four questions: (1) What is the vitality of Zhouqu Tibetan on the EGIDS scale? (2) In which language domains is Zhouqu Tibetan used? (3) What are local attitudes towards this speech variety? (4) What are local perceptions of dialectal differences within Zhouqu Tibetan?

## METHODOLOGY

In order to explore these four questions, the researcher used three participatory method tools developed by Hasselbring (2011) and sociolinguistic interviews of both a formal and informal nature. The three participatory methods tools were: (1) Overlapping Circles, a tool exploring bilingualism; (2) The Languages We Speak, a tool exploring what domains different languages are used in; and (3) the Dialect Mapping Tool that explores local perceptions of dialectical variation. Each of these tools can be thought of as a participatory, group interview whereby the facilitator asks open-ended questions and the participants are encouraged to discuss the answers with each other and collectively arrive at an answer.

Overlapping Circles begins with the facilitator asking the participant experts what languages are spoken and written where they live. The names of these languages are then written down and placed in a horizontal line where everyone can see them. After this, the facilitator asks what type of people speak or write these languages.

Answers might include groups like "students," "migrant workers," "civil servants," etc. These answers are written down and put under the corresponding language "column" created during the first question. The participants are then asked to use two strings to circle those people who: (1) speak/write the first language well, but lack a good grasp of the second language; (2) speak/write the second language well, but don't have a good grasp of the first language; and (3) speak/write both languages well. This third group is located where the strings overlap with each other, hence the tool's name.

The Languages We Speak also begins with listing what the local languages are and arranging them horizontally so that it is convenient for everyone to see. This is followed by asking in what situations the participants use each of the languages. These situations are written down and placed under the corresponding language. Next, they are ordered according to the frequency of these activities and the amount of time spent on them.

In the Dialect Mapping Tool, the participants are given pieces of paper and asked to write down all the places that use the same language (L1) as they do. Participants are then asked to arrange these pieces of paper in a way that roughly reflects their geographical proximity to each other. Questions are then asked about their frequency of travel to these places and how well they understand the speech varieties of each place listed.

A total of five villages were visited (see Table 1). All three of these tools were used in full at Gongba, Qugaona, and Boyu. In Wuping Village, only the Overlapping Circles Tool was used. In Chagang Village, we were only able to find two people to participate and used the questions from the tools to conduct a more traditional interview.

Table 1: Data Points and Demographics.<sup>1</sup>

Village Name	Population	Percentage of Tibetans	Percentage of Han Chinese
Wuping	5,983	51.50	48.50
Chagang	3,374	largely Tibetan, exact demographic split unknown	several Han Chinese Hamlets
Gongba	5,827	99.83	?
Qugaona	13,103	100.00	0.00
Boyu	5,432	95.00	5.00

RESULTS

The results from the participatory interviews are as follows:

- Zhouqu Tibetan is used vigorously in all language domains found within the geographic area of its use; it is the language of home and village life.
- The Zhouqu Tibetans have a high level of Chinese, which is developed first in school and then strengthened as they work as migrant workers in neighboring cities.
- Zhouqu Tibetan is not used when someone is present who does not understand this particular variety of Tibetan. This is likely to happen in government offices because not all of the civil servants working in the area are local Tibetans. It also happens when Han Chinese from the Han Chinese hamlets in Wuping and Chagang interact with Tibetans from neighboring hamlets. It was

<sup>1</sup> This data was obtained from Zhouqu County's government website: [http://www.zqx.gov.cn/nzcms\\_show\\_news.asp?id=10808](http://www.zqx.gov.cn/nzcms_show_news.asp?id=10808), accessed 1 May 2017.

mentioned, though, that some of the Han Chinese in these hamlets have learned to speak Zhouqu Tibetan.

- Parents, with few exceptions, do not speak Chinese with their children, who do not learn Chinese until they go to school. Many but not all middle-aged Tibetans speak Chinese. All young people who are at least in or above grades three and four speak Chinese. Many of the older generation, however, never learned.
- In the schools, teachers in the lower grades, especially grades one and two of elementary school, use both Tibetan and Chinese to explain the Chinese textbooks.
- In terms of population density, the majority of people are Tibetan in most of these villages, thus the common language for everyday communication is Tibetan. Many locals go to work in the big cities on a part time basis, but when they return to their villages, they are ridiculed if they speak Chinese. In certain villages gathering medicinal herbs in the mountains is the main source of income, those who go to the city to work only stay for a relatively short time - at most several months.
- When locals looked inward at their community, language attitudes were quite positive, reflecting how they view their language as part of their identity. Nevertheless, when looking beyond their community to the outside world, they acutely realize the importance of learning Chinese for better health care, education, and employment.
- Tibetans in these villages feel that their dialects are roughly the same and that they have no trouble communicating throughout this region. However, they do indicate that the variety of Zhouqu Tibetan spoken in Boyu is somewhat different and at times this difference impacts intelligibility.

Accordingly, it appears that Zhouqu Tibetan should be ranked either 6a, Vigorous, or 6b, Threatened, on the EGIDS scale. Paul Lewis and Gary Simons combined Joshua Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) with UNESCO's language vitality scale to create the Extended Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS). The combination gives numbered rankings between zero and ten. Level six and eight are further divided into an 'a' and 'b' level,

giving the final scale thirteen distinct rankings. EGIDS 6a, Vigorous, has the following five characteristics:

1. The oral language is used for every domain desired.
2. All children learn the vernacular in their homes (literacy, if any, however, is in the second language).
3. Speakers see many benefits in speaking their language, but do not see benefits in writing it.
4. The government allows the language to be spoken but does not allow the language to be developed.
5. Speakers share a common set of habits that determine when they use the vernacular and when they use the language of wider communication.

EGIDS 6b, Threatened, has a similar set of five characteristics:

1. The oral language is used for some of the domains desired.
2. Although the language is used amongst all generations orally, only some parents are using the language in the home with their children.
3. Many of the child-bearing generation only see benefit in using their language orally in some language domains while others see more benefit in switching to a more dominant language.
4. The government allows the language to be spoken, but does not allow the language to be developed.
5. Dominant languages are encroaching on domains which were traditionally reserved for the local language.

## DISCUSSION

We had only four days to make this trip, which is too short a time to do a thorough socio-linguistic survey. However, we witnessed a strong degree of continuity between the interviews, our observations, and the many discussions we had with drivers, inn keepers, farmers, teachers, and local business people. We were able to observe Zhouqu Tibetan language use in shops, in government offices, at a school, between family members, in homes, between children, and in the villages in

general. These observations confirm the reliability of what local participants related to us regarding language vitality, domains of language use, language attitudes, and local perceptions of dialectal differences.

Although the results seem to present a strong and healthy language situation, the fact remains that there are some instances of Chinese replacing Zhouqu Tibetan as the language of the home. There is also a local perception that Chinese is a critical skill for such fundamental domains as education, healthcare, and employment. We therefore include EGIDS 6b, Threatened, as a possible ranking for Zhouqu Tibetan. Most people we spoke to, including parents, knew of only relatively few examples of parents not passing on Zhouqu Tibetan to their children. However, given that this was completely unheard of in the previous generation, it is clear that a new trend has emerged. Because of these factors, we felt it important to include EGIDS 6b as a possible score for Zhouqu Tibetan.

The position of the Boyu speech variety of Zhouqu Tibetan is complicated by the fact that, although there are historical and geographical reasons to expect a difference, we are unsure if references to Boyu's aberrancy referred to Zhouqu Tibetan or Baima. Local perceptions of Zhouqu Tibetan's linguistic variation support Suzuki's (2015) preliminary dialectal classification, with the exception of Boyu. A possible explanation is found in Zhouta (1996), who writes that the Tibetans who inhabit Boyu came from an area stretching from Benzilan, Yunnan, in the south to Changdu, Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), in the north. This is not the original homeland of the first Tibetans to arrive in Zhouqu. Zhouta (1996) states that the first Tibetans to come to Zhouqu came from an area stretching from Shannan Region, TAR, in the west to the Gongbu Region, TAR, in the east. In addition, Boyu belongs to a different river valley than the other four villages of this study. A pass connects these two valleys. Reaching it requires (traveling west) climbing from 1,500 to 3,550 meters and then back down to 1,830 meters. This is a long climb over steep terrain. Although these two factors suggest that different linguistic origins and limited language contact might contribute to perceived differences, it is also possible that what is being referred to is the Baima language. Baima is spoken in several villages located within Boyu (Suzuki 2015).

We did ask participants if they were referring to Baima or Zhouqu Tibetan when they spoke of the Boyu speech variety's aberrancy. They responded negatively, but given our short time in the research area, we were unable to corroborate their evaluation. In Boyu itself, our research consultants were all natives of Jiyenuo, a non-Baima village of Boyu.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the high level of bilingualism present among the Zhouqu Tibetans, Zhouqu Tibetan is used in all language domains found within the local area. It is likely to be 6a Vigorous or 6b Threatened on the EGIDS scale. Local language attitudes are positive in general, but there is recognition that economic stability, healthcare, and education all require proficiency in Mandarin Chinese. Overall, it appears that in Zhouqu County, which is represented in this study, language vitality is stronger than Suzuki (2015) suggests. There appears to be little dialectal variation between the villages of Wuping, Chagang, Gongba, and Qugaona. The village of Boyu is reported by locals to be somewhat different, and this difference is significant enough to affect intelligibility.

FIG 1. Zhouqu's location in China (Google Earth, 2016; Gansu Province Atlas, 2000).

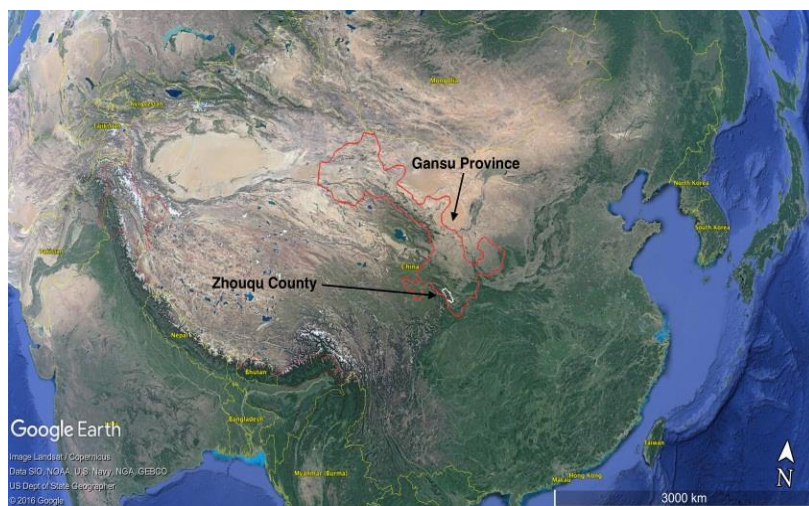




FIG 2. The Research Area (Google Earth, 2016; Gansu Province Atlas, 2000).

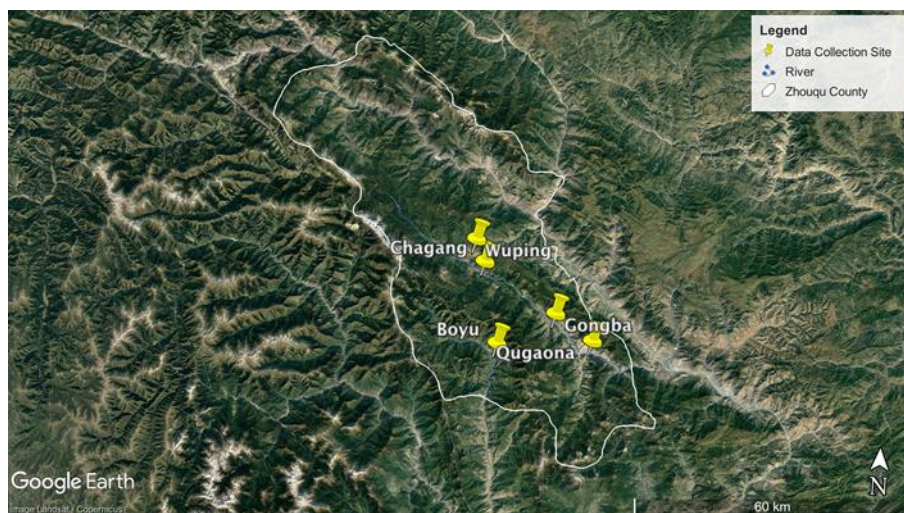


FIG 3. A hamlet belonging to Chagang Village (Abe Powell, 2015).





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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Baima 白马

Baleng 八楞

Benzilan 奔子栏

Boyu 博峪

Chagang 插岗

Changdu 昌都

China 中国

Choni 卓尼

Gansu 甘肃

Gongba 拱坝

Gongbu 工布

Guoye 果耶

Jiyenuo 吉也诺

Longnan 陇南

Pingya 坪坝

Qugaona 曲告纳

Shannan 山南

Tanchang 宕昌

Thewo 迭部

Tibet Autonomous Region, Xizang zhizhiqu 西藏自治区

Tielou 铁楼

Wuping 武坪

Yunnan 云南

Zhouqu 舟曲

TIBETAN DAILY LIFE ON THE GCAN TSHA THANG GRASSLAND

Sangs rgyas bkra shis སངས་རྒྱལ་བཀྲ་ཤིས། (Sangjiezaxi 桑杰扎西; Duke University) with CK Stuart (Shaanxi Normal University)

ABSTRACT

Daily pastoral life in Rkang mo, Lo ba, Ka rgya dang bo, and Ka rgya gnyis pa pastoral communities located in Gcan tsha thang (Jianzhatan) Township, Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province is described as it existed in 2013. Religion, winter housing, livestock and herding, winter, summer, the autumn camp, photographs of daily life, and four accounts are provided.

KEYWORDS

daily Tibetan life, Gcan tsha thang, Qinghai Province, Tibetan herding life, Tibetan pastoral life

After all, everyday life simply *is*, indisputably: the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds. It is the ultimate, non-negotiable reality, the unavoidable basis for all other forms of human endeavor (Felski 1999:15).

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

What do most Tibetans do on an ordinary day in the herding area where I<sup>2</sup> was born and grew up? I never considered this question until I came to Xi'an City in Shaanxi Province to do a college degree in English. Before this, I had been surrounded by Tibetans on a daily basis, while attending Tibetan primary schools and then during my five years at Rwa rgya School (Gangs ljongs shes rig nor bu'i gling) in Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province.

In 2012, I enrolled in Xi'an International Studies University and joined an English major class of twenty-five students, of whom twenty were female and five were male. There were two Uygur students from the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and three Tibetan students (all young men, including me). The other students were all Han.

I was often asked about my community, for example: "What do people often eat in your home place?" "What sort of clothes do you wear at home?" "What kind and how many livestock does your family have?" "Can you ride a horse?" "How did you go to school when you were a child?"

Sometimes I joked in my broken Chinese that I rode a wild yak or a gentle wolf to school.

The students stared at me in amazement when I talked to them in my broken Chinese. While answering their questions and registering their surprise, I realized how different my family's daily life was from the daily life of my classmates - many of whom became my friends. I also realized how few people in China and, in fact, the world lived as

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Gabriela Samcewicz, Timothy Thurston, and Snying lcags rgyal for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> All first person references signify Sangs rgyas bkra shis.

my family lives. I then decided to write about the daily life I was familiar with.

I am writing about daily life in Rkang mo, Lo ba, Ka rgya dang bo, and Ka rgya gnyis pa pastoral communities based on my experiences and those of my family. There are many things I am not writing about, for example, the daily life of monks and nuns, activities on special days such as during Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year', weddings, funerals, and so on.

Daily life is changing rapidly, as I detail at the end of this paper. My father, for example, bought a small, new pick-up truck in 2013, as higher sale prices for our livestock brought us more cash income. This truck and other relatively recent changes such as mobile phones, and more disposable income, explain many on-going changes in daily life.

What ordinary people do every day is important because it defines our fundamental performance as humans and constitutes the largest portion of our lived existence. Nevertheless, mundane lives are often dismissed and undocumented as evidenced by how the field of Tibetan history and contemporary Tibetan Studies often ignore this.<sup>1</sup>

Tibetan people's daily life is at a critical moment in history as it shifts in multiple directions, under various outside pressures. Meanwhile, older generations are passing away, often leaving grandchildren who know little of their grandparents' personal/community histories.

My interest in elders (born in the 1930s) led me to listen closely as they chatted to one another and later, to ask questions, but it is very challenging to find detailed, accurate records before the 1930s related to my community. This lack of information is a great loss. Appreciating the magnitude of this loss motivates me to write in some detail about the daily life I experienced as a child in order to create an accurate record for my children and grandchildren so that they will have a better understanding of their/our culture and people.<sup>2</sup> This effort at

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<sup>1</sup> There are noteworthy exceptions, e.g., see Orgyan Nyima (2016), Gangs phrug (2015), and Naktsang Nulo (2014); and several autoethnographies published by *Asian Highlands Perspectives* (e.g., Tshe beu lha mo 2013).

<sup>2</sup> To this end, I have also described my experiences with songs and singing in my home community (Sangs rgyas bkra shis et al. 2015).

documenting daily life in this particular herding area may also interest others outside my home community who are interested in the lives of ordinary, herding Tibetans.

## FAMILY AND LOCATION

My family (FIG 6) consists of six people: my father (Rin chen rgyal, b. 1963), mother (Klu mo tshe ring, b. 1963), eldest brother (Dge 'dun shes rab, b. 1984), elder brother (Ban de rgyal, b. 1986), sister-in-law (Gser mtsho skyid, b. 1988), and me (Sangs rgyas bkra shis, b. 1991). My paternal grandmother (Pa lo skyid, b. 1940) lives next door in the home of Father's youngest brother (Skal bzang rdo rje, b. 1988). His family members consist of his wife (Rdo rje skyid, b. 1988), and two sons (Gcod pa don 'grub, b. 2006; Dpal ldan bkra shis, b. 2007) and one daughter (G.yang 'dzoms lha mo, b. 2009). Grandmother frequently goes back and forth between our two homes.

Gcan tsha thang (Jianzhatan) Township is located in Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province. The township consists of seven pastoral communities: G.yon ru (Xiayangzhi), Sprel nag (Shinaihai), Gle gzhug (Laiyu), Rkang mo (Gangmao), Lo ba (Luowa), Ka rgya dang bo (Gajiyi), and Ka rgya gnyis pa (Gajiaer).<sup>1</sup> Gcan tsha thang Township, at an average elevation of 3,500 meters above sea level, has a land area of 642 square kilometers and a population of 4,000, of whom ninety-nine percent, according to official statistics, is Tibetan.<sup>2</sup>

Agriculture is practiced only in Gle gzhug where locals cultivate barley, wheat, and canola. Nearly all families raise yaks (FIG 5), sheep (FIG 36, 37), horses, and a few goats.

The township offices are located in the township seat/capital, which is called Gcan tsha thang (Jianzhatan). In 2014, this small settlement consisted of one main road along which there were several

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<sup>1</sup> Data for elevation, population, and pastoral communities are from <http://bit.ly/2H3S4rF> (accessed 3 March 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Teachers, township government workers, and others constitute the remaining one percent. For more on this community, see Sangs rgyas bkra shis with Stuart (2014).

small shops that sold clothes, snacks, and candy; several township government offices; and a Hope primary school<sup>1</sup> that had three grades<sup>2</sup> with a total of some 200 students ranging from eight to thirteen years old, who were mostly from G.yon ru Pastoral Community, and ten teachers. Another Hope primary school located about fifteen minutes by motorcycle from the township seat had four grades,<sup>3</sup> and in 2014, it had about 300 students and thirteen teachers. This school is mostly attended by children from Rkang mo, Lo ba, Ka rgya dang bo, and Ka rgya gnyis pa pastoral communities. When students finish Grade Three in the former school and Grade Four in the latter school, those continuing their education attend primary school<sup>4</sup> in the county town, Mar khu thang.<sup>5</sup>

Other pastoral communities have their own elementary schools. I am from Lo ba Pastoral Community, which has about 115 households, fifty of which belong to the Lho ba Tsho ba 'tribe'. The remaining sixty-five belong to the Lo ba Tribe. Every household has a fixed house where they live in winter. Tribal exogamy is practiced, i.e., members of Lho ba and Lo ba tribes intermarry. I belong to the Lho ba Tribe.

## RELIGION

When asked to name their religion, local residents reply, "Sangs rgyas chos lugs" 'Buddhism'. The Dge lugs monastery, Dga' ldan bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling, located in Ka rgya Pastoral Community, is the most

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<sup>1</sup> The non-governmental Project Hope, sponsored by the Communist Youth League Central Committee and the China Youth Development Foundation, provides support to schools in rural areas of China (<http://on.china.cn/2DpkOxF>, accessed 19 January 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Grades One, Two, and Three. There was no kindergarten/ pre-school class.

<sup>3</sup> Grades One, Two, Three, and Four. There was no kindergarten/ pre-school class.

<sup>4</sup> Despite the existence of a national compulsory education law, about 80 percent of children born around 1991 (the year of my birth) did not complete nine years of school. About thirty percent never attended school at all, e.g., my older brother. To my knowledge, no local families were punished for not ensuring their children were in school.

<sup>5</sup> Gcan tsha rdzong 'Gcan tsha County' is a term for Mar khu thang that is now widely used among younger, educated people. However, Grandmother and other elders generally say Mar khu thang.



important religious center for locals. From my home, this monastery is about a thirty-minute walk or fifteen-minute motorcycle ride. This monastery was founded in 1897 by Dpal ldan, a monk from Rkang mo Village. At that time, the monastery was situated in Rkang mo Village and called Sgar chag. Later, a Tibetan scholar, Zhwa dmar paṇḍita Dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, moved the monastery to its current location. The monastery was then offered to the fifth reincarnation *bla ma*, Ngang rong lnga ba 'jam dbyangs mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, who became *dgon bdag* 'master of the monastery'.<sup>1</sup> In 2013, the monastery had about thirty-six monks, who visited homes when invited to perform such religious activities as funerals, healing rituals, and chanting sessions.

On the fifteenth day of the fourth lunar month, a representative from each family living in the four pastoral communities Ka rgya dang bo, Ka rgya gnyis pa, Rkang mo, and Lo ba would go to Dga' ldan bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling to fast. This is called the Bzhi ba'i smyung gnas (Fourth Month Fast),<sup>2</sup> and is the most widely attended ritual held at this monastery. The fast lasts two days. Attendance at other rituals, e.g., Smon lam, conducted at the monastery is much lower, with locals preferring to go to larger monasteries such as Bde chen dgon pa,<sup>3</sup> also located in Gcan tsha County.

For the Fourth Month Fast in 2001 when I was thirteen years old, everyone gathered in the monastery chanting room and chanted. On the first day, we brought *rtsam pa*,<sup>4</sup> *mar* 'butter', and *chur ba* 'dry cheese' for ourselves from home. We had milk tea in the morning and

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<sup>1</sup> Information on this monaster is from Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho (b. 1966), a monk from Gshong mo che Monastery. Dga' ldan bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling Monastery is a branch of Gshong mo che Monastery.

<sup>2</sup> The fifteenth day marks the Buddha's enlightenment and Mahāparinirvāṇa. While many locals may be unfamiliar with the particular nature of this date, they believe that it is an important religious time.

<sup>3</sup> Bde chen dgon pa is about forty-five minutes from my home by car or motorcycle.

<sup>4</sup> *Rtsam pa* refers to roasted barley flour. It also refers to a staple food that is made by pouring hot tea in a bowl and then adding butter, dry cheese, roasted barely and, according to personal preference, sugar. Four fingers are used to mix these ingredients to form a ball which is then eaten. My family uses a hand mill (FIG 55 ) in our home to grind roasted barley grain into *rtsam pa*.

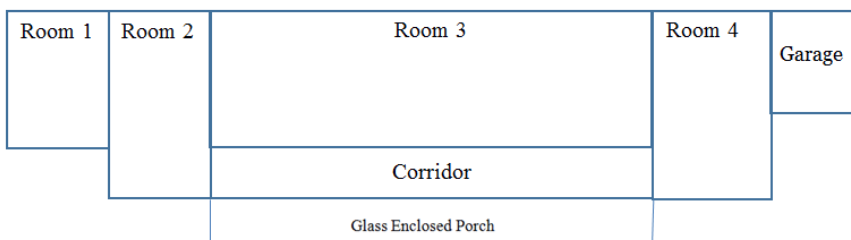
*rtsam pa* and milk tea for lunch. We tried to have a lot because we would not eat for the rest of the day, nor the next. That afternoon, we drank milk called *rung ja*. The next day we were not allowed to chat nor eat. We chanted the whole day. On the final morning we had flour cooked in milk - *thor thug*.

## WINTER HOUSE

The first month of the lunar calendar is the beginning of spring, summer technically begins with the fourth month, fall with the seventh, and winter with the 10<sup>th</sup>. Because actual forage periods differ at different altitudes, we spend varying amounts of time at the different pastures.

My family lives in a house constructed from a combination of adobe and wood and also in tents in summer pastures in the mountains (FIGS 3, 4) and on a separate grassland in late summer and autumn (FIGS 17, 18). Our one-story winter home is located at the foot of a mountain on a large grassland (FIGS 1, 3). It has four rooms, none of which have a specific name. For the sake of convenience, I refer to them as rooms One, Two, Three, and Four (see SKETCH 1).

SKETCH 1. My Family's house (not to scale).



Father lived all year round in a black yak hair tent until 1972, when he was about nine years old. At that time, my paternal grandparents constructed a simple one-room house. They then lived in this house in winter and in tents for other parts of the year while herding livestock. Later, my grandparents moved near where our present house is, and built another simple one-room house, after which they moved to our present home location and built another

house.

In about 2005, Father again decided that we should have a new house. He paid and supervised about six Tibetans from farming areas in Gcan tsha County to make the packed earth walls of the house. Wall-building required about one week. Father then paid a Chinese family that lived near Khri ka County Town for a yard of trees. The trees were cut down, and the logs were transported to our home. The house was built by four Tibetan carpenters - three brothers and their brother-in-law - from Bde chen Village, Gcan tsha County. They worked for about two months to build our house.

The flat roof of the home was made of wood, over which was layered lightly packed *sa dkar* 'white soil'/'loess'), a piece of plastic, and finally another layer of *sa dkar*. After the house construction was finished, my family plastered the inside walls with a thin coat of mud which, after it dried, they whitewashed. We also made *hu tse*<sup>1</sup> and cooking stoves in rooms One and Three.

Rooms Three and Four were paneled with wood. Floors of red bricks were laid in all rooms by a Chinese man from Khri ka County. In about 2010, we added a glass-enclosed porch (FIG 52) in front of our home.

Brother and Sister-in-law sleep in Room One where there is a *hu tse* (FIG 51) warmed by a stove. This room is where we cook. Cooking creates smoke that blackens furniture, walls, and the ceiling. Confining cooking to this room keeps the largest room where guests are entertained cleaner. Flour, cooking utensils, cups, bowls, plates, cooking oil, water buckets, potatoes, onions, cabbage, and flour are kept here.

There is a large bed (with a wooden frame) in Room Four, along with an 'o zo 'churn' (FIG 43), sheepskins, flour stored in bags (FIG 28),

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<sup>1</sup> Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart (2008:26) give the explanation below for the *hu tse*, which they spell *hezee*. We use the spelling "*hu tse*" because this closely approximates what is said locally.

"*Hezee*" is a Tibetan word that lacks an accurate standard written form. Today, it is also increasingly in literary Tibetan as "*tsha thab*" that translates as "hot stove." This is incorrect because the *hezee* is not a hot stove, rather, it is a hollow platform made of stones with a thin layer of dry, hard earth on top, which is where family members sleep and important guests eat.

ropes, tents, *rtsam pa*, *chur ba*, butter, and robes and other clothing. There is also a small metal stove in this room, but we rarely use it. If someone sleeps here in winter, an electric blanket provides warmth. A small garage is attached to Room Four.

In Room Three (FIG 49), the largest room, there is a *hu tse*; a cooking area (FIG 45) that includes a stove connected to the *hu tse*, several stools, a brick floor on which several carpets are laid out for guests who prefer to sit on the floor (e.g., older people), and a television across from the *hu tse*. Tea (historically kept in *ka mo* 'small woven bags', FIG 20) is routinely boiled on the stove in this room. Cooking, however, is done here generally only when we have many guests, for example, during Lo sar. The *hu tse* runs the length of one wall, and is big enough to sleep five or six people. Room Three also has a freezer, refrigerator, washing machine, television, DVD player, two wall cabinets, and two free-standing cabinets. Felt mats and carpets are stored in the wall cabinets. Dishes, candy, metal buckets, large metal plates, tea bowls, butter, glasses, and chopsticks are stored in the free-standing cabinets (FIG 48). Under the red, free-standing cabinet is a metal box with dung and a wooden box that holds *rtsam pa*, butter, and dried cheese.

At one end of the *hu tse* is the *chos sgam* (scripture cabinet, FIG 50). This is a wooden, glass-enclosed cabinet holding several *thang ka*, several volumes of scriptures (e.g., *Ting 'phags bskal gsum*, *Gser 'od*, and *Gzungs bsdus*), an electric-powered prayer wheel, a mandala, and images of various religious personages (FIG 7). There are pictures of the Karmapa (O rgyan 'phrin las rdo rje, b. 1985), the tenth Paṇ chen rin po che (1938-1989), Jo bo rin po che,<sup>1</sup> and Rje rin po che (Tsong kha pa 1357-1419). The outside of the cabinet is framed by a string of colored electric lights that are turned on day and night for the first three days of Lo sar. The lights are also turned on for a couple of hours on the nights of the first, third, fifth, eighth, and fifteenth days of each lunar month. In addition, a *mchod me* (butter lamp) is placed on the *mchod khri* and lit each night. The latter refers, in this case, to a table in front of the scripture cabinet on which are placed twenty-eight *dung phor* 'water bowls' (described below).

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<sup>1</sup> A Śākyamuni image in the Jo khang in Lha sa.

In the house, different types of fuel are used. Yak dung catches fire easily, burns quickly, and gives off much heat, which facilitates cooking. *Lci ba* refers to wet yak dung and *ong ba* refers to dried yak dung. In contrast, *ril ma* 'sheep/goat dung' does not catch fire as easily and therefore, yak dung is generally burned first to ignite it. Also, because sheep/goat dung burns more slowly, it is added to the fire at night in order to have embers the next morning. Sheep/goat dung is put in the back of a *thab ka* 'stove' and yak dung is put in the front. In addition, yak dung pieces are put into the *thab khung* 'stove hole'<sup>1</sup> and added when necessary. Ash and embers are removed from a *go khung* 'bottom opening' in the stove under the metal shelf.

The *go dung* is a rectangular area (fifty-five by forty-five centimeters) that contains ash in front of the stove. Family members sit around the *go dung* during meals when there are no formal visitors. The general area for sitting and eating is the *go kha* (FIG 46), a rectangular space in front of the stove where embers are scraped out of the fire from the stove to provide warmth.

Room Two is used mostly as the place for entertaining guests, particularly Han guests who prefer to sit in armchairs rather than on the *hu tse* or on a floor carpet. There is a metal stove where dung may be burned. However, if heating is necessary when guests visit, we now more often use an electric heater. In 2014, this room contained four large armchairs, three wooden stools, and a television that receives signals from our satellite dish. One wall is lined with stacked wooden boxes that contain clothes; cloth; quilts; pillows; and women's coral, turquoise, and silver adornments. The wall at the back of the room features a glass-faced cabinet that holds *thang ka*, some of my school awards, and plastic flowers. The lower parts of the walls of this room are covered with ceramic tiles bought from Khri ka County Town.

Our glass enclosed porch is about four meters wide and nine meters long. It runs in front of rooms Two, Three, and Four. Here we dry our family's clothes after washing, and chives.<sup>2</sup> Once dried, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Thab khung* literally translates as 'stove hole', but more precisely, it refers to the upper part of the top opening in the front of the stove)

<sup>2</sup> We buy chives from Khri ka County Town and from Chinese businessmen from Khri ka County who come to our community with a truck and sell flour, chives, potatoes, barley grain, wheat grain, and bricks. These men speak

chives are put in plastic bags and stored here, for later use as livestock feed.

The final space in the home to mention is the corridor that runs in front of Room Three. The outside wall is the glass wall that is shared with the glass-enclosed porch. The corridor is a space for bags of flour, rice, and barley, a motorcycle, and two cabinets for storing pots and other items.

#### LIVESTOCK AND HERDING

In 2013, my family made three seasonal movements with our livestock. In the fifth lunar month, Father, Elder Brother, and Sister-in-law took our livestock (thirty yaks and 300 sheep) to the mountains. Typically, we would leave at about eight AM, reach the mountain campsite at about five PM, and then pitch our tents. I was attending university at that time and unable to accompany them.

Mother and Grandmother stayed at our winter home, where they guarded the house and property and cared for the two sons of Father's youngest brother. They kept five goats of which they milked three. The goat milk is used only to make milk tea.

After about forty-five days, Elder Brother and Sister-in-law packed the tent and other belongings, gathered the livestock, and left the mountain in the morning at around eight. They reached Ston sa (autumn place; FIGS 15, 16, 17, 18,) at about six PM. Here, our family shares a fenced pasture (FIGS 19, 38) with two other families. This location is about one hour on foot from our winter house. After about two months of herding the yaks and sheep in Ston sa, they moved back to our winter house.

We live in tents on the mountain and also in Ston sa. Until about 2005, we lived in black yak hair tents. Afterwards, we used a *ras gur* 'cloth tent'. *Sga* 'pack frames' are put on the yaks the night before moving. Everything that is to be transported is made ready. The items

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good Tibetan and know local people who can contact them by phone and ask for delivery of certain goods.

to be transported are loaded on the yaks the next morning and then the livestock and herders begin the move.

In terms of our annual movements (TABLE 1), we live in Dgun sa 'winter place' for about seven months, on the mountain for one and a half months, and in Sgon sa for about four months. The exact times vary from year to year depending on weather and pasture conditions.

TABLE 1. Annual Schedule

Lunar Month	Activity	People	Location
1 <sup>st</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
2 <sup>nd</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
3 <sup>rd</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
4 <sup>th</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
5 <sup>th</sup>	go to the Gser chen Mountains to herd; Mother and Grandmother stay at Dgun sa	Sister-in-law, Father, Brother, Mother (for 1 or 2 days)	Gser chen Mountains
5 <sup>th</sup>	care for the home, milk three goats, cut grass, soften lambskins (FIG 39), watch the fences and fenced pasture to prevent trespassing livestock from O'u rong Village	Grandmother and Mother	Dgun sa, Ston sa
15 <sup>th</sup> day, 6 <sup>th</sup> lunar month	pack, move to Ston sa	Sister-in-law, Father, Brother, Sister-in-law, Mother (who comes and goes)	Ston sa
15 <sup>th</sup> day, 8 <sup>th</sup> lunar month	herd sheep to Dgun sa	Father and Mother	Dgun sa
16 <sup>th</sup> day, 10 <sup>th</sup> lunar month	herd livestock	Brother and Sister-in-law (yaks); Mother and Father (sheep)	Ston sa (yaks) Dgun sa (sheep)
11 <sup>th</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa
12 <sup>th</sup>	caring for livestock	all	Dgun sa



I will now give three accounts illustrating my experiences on the mountains, in the autumn camp, and at our winter home.

#### ACCOUNT ONE

I went to the mountain with Uncle Dkon mchog rgyal the first time when I was eleven. I was in school and my family had already moved to the mountains when my summer holiday came. Uncle Dkon mchog rgyal came to buy some supplies near the school where there were some small shops. Father had told him to pick me up.

It was afternoon when we reached the foot of the mountains, which were covered with dark, thick fog. It was lightly raining. I could only see about ten meters in front of me. My family's camp was in a deep valley. The mountains are very steep and I could hardly keep up with Uncle Dkon mchog rgyal who said, "Young people who lack experience here easily get lost. Sometimes even those who have often been here lose their way in the fog."

People shouted when they got lost, hoping to meet someone who would show them the right direction. There were piles of stones on the way that Uncle Dkon mchog rgyal said local people had made to show the directions when someone got lost.

Grandmother once told me that Father's third brother, Rdo rje thar, and fourth brother, Bkra shis rgya mtsho, got lost when they were returning from Ko'u ba Monastery. They came to a place where white rocks were strewn about. We call those stones *ko ro*. It is very easy to slide on those rocks when it rains. Bkra shis rgya mtsho lost his footing and hurt his foot so badly that he could not walk. Rdo rje thar carried him on his back. When it got dark they heard wolves howling. It was very cold and Bkra shis rgya mtsho almost died there. They finally found a home and spent the night there.

There is a spring of very clean water near our tent. We can hear the sound of the spring water trickling down the mountain. Mother and Father were delighted by my arrival. Mother gave me some sparrows and spoons that she had carved out of wood. Brother told me that he would take me to collect wild strawberries on a sunny day. All this excited me.

The next morning, there was no fog and not a single cloud in the sky. The sun shone unobstructed throughout the valley. Chirping birds flew

about. The right side of the valley was covered with various trees and the left side was decorated with many beautiful flowers. The livestock wandered freely and herdsmen gathered at the top of the valley and enjoyed the beautiful views of the landscape.

Because my neighbor did not have children who could herd calves, I and other children herded my family's calves and our neighbor's calves. My neighbor gave me candy and cooked delicious food to reward me when I returned from herding. We often herded the calves into the trees and then washed our feet in a stream where we swam and splashed each other. Sometimes we competed to see who could collect the driest wood and carry it home. Parents praised us for helping bring back fuel.

One morning when fog covered the earth, I herded my calves to a hollow where there was wonderful, fresh grass and then I returned to our tent. I checked my calves at noon and found they were all gone. I searched everywhere, but I could not find them. The fog became thicker and thicker. Giving up on finding the calves, I decided to return home. It would soon be dark. Suddenly, I lost my sense of direction. I went from valley to valley searching for my family's camp. I shouted, hoping to meet someone. I was nervous and my heart was pounding.

We called a place with dense trees *spyang tshang* 'den of wolves'. We could hear the many wolves there howling when darkness fell. I thought I might be near that place and my legs quavered. Luckily, I met an older man who told me I was going in a completely wrong direction. He guided me for about one kilometer, pointed out the correct direction, and said that I should go straight ahead. I thanked him and returned home. My parents were calling my name loudly when I got near our tent. They knew I was lost and were afraid that I would not find the way back. Brother said the calves had found their mothers who were nursing them when he went to collect the mother yaks.

## ACCOUNT TWO

Wolves are a very real concern. Every night on the mountains, men went out and shouted to prevent wolves from attacking our livestock. We camped with about seven other families. Our camps are very near each other. The other families are our *ru skor* 'neighbors'. All of the group's sheep are put together in the center of the camps.

One night in about 2004, the dogs barked loudly and madly lunged against their chains. The chains were clanking, the calves were bawling, and then someone shouted, "Everybody get up! Wolves are attacking our sheep!"

Father and Brother got up immediately and ran into the dark with their flashlights. I tried to go with them but Mother held me back, scolding, "You are too young to go with them."

All the adult men shouted and went after the wolves. Only half of the sheep were left. About one hour later, Father and Brother came back with the others and reported:

The wolves drove off half of the sheep. Some sheep were attacked and collapsed on the way. There are about three or four wolves and we cannot get the sheep back if we do not have six men. It's dark and we do not know how many sheep are missing.

The next morning, injured and dead sheep were all around the camp. The injured sheep had been bitten on the neck and belly. Two dead sheep did not have heads. We threw away the dead sheep and vultures and crows swooped in for a meal. Father and Brother separated our sheep from the others and counted them. Though ours are not marked to indicate ownership, Brother and Father know them well and can easily recognize them. Two of my family's sheep had been injured and one was dead. One sheep's stomach had been ripped open. Father sewed it with a needle and a white string, and then wrapped it with cloth. The other sheep had a neck injury. A large piece of skin was missing. Father could not sew it so he wrapped it in cloth. In total, ten sheep were injured and five were dead.

Grandmother said:

Wolves try to bite as many sheep as they can, and then try to take one with them at the last moment. They like to take sheep's heads and udders with them and teach their cubs how to attack sheep.

## ACCOUNT THREE

We were living in a tent on the autumn grassland when I was about ten. Father went somewhere leaving Mother, Brother, and me at home. One night when I was sleeping, a bug crawled into my ear. I woke up because it was very uncomfortable. I could feel the bug moving in my ear. It was terribly painful. I woke Mother who said, "Don't be afraid and nervous. If you feel nervous and cry, the bug will go deeper into your head." She quickly built up the fire, heated a bit of butter, and poured it into my ear. My ear felt thick and dense but the bug stopped moving. My ear felt uncomfortable for some days. Later, my ear returned to normal and the bug dried and broken bits of the bug fell out of my ear. Grandmother often tells children:

Don't sleep on the grassland while you are herding. Let me tell you why: One day, a woman was sleeping on the mountain while she was herding sheep. A snake crawled into her mouth. She was terrified and tried to pull the snake out with her hands. This frightened the snake, which moved deeper into her body. She ran to her home and her family took her to a hospital, but she was already dead when they arrived. A doctor examined her and said that the snake had bitten a big vein of her heart.

## WINTER

## Morning

In the morning of a typical winter day, Mother gets up first at about six AM, folds her quilt, and puts on her robe. She shovels the ash from the adobe stove with a *me lcags* 'ember shovel' into a metal bucket that she carries outside and empties onto an ash pile (FIG 31) that sits in a gutter near the front of our house.

Coming back inside, she puts soft dry yak dung atop embers in the adobe stove. The morning wind blows on the embers and the dung catches fire. Room Three begins to warm. Mother pours water from a

thermos into a basin, adds some cold water, washes her face, and brushes her teeth.

She then puts a long mat on the floor and begins prostrating and chanting *Skyabs 'gro, Sgrol ma, Ltung bshags, Bar chad lam sel, Bzang spyod smon lam*, and so on. Though Mother never attended school, she taught herself to read and has memorized texts that she often repeats. After one one hundred prostrations, she goes to Room One, wakes Sister-in-law, and locates their blue plastic water pails. As Mother walks around, the sound of her chanting pervades the house. It is often cold in the morning, and pausing her chanting, Mother urges Sister-in-law to put on a *rtsag pa* (full length, sheep-skin robe).

When dawn breaks, Mother and Sister-in-law each carry their own pail on their backs and go to fetch water (FIG 10). All the while Father and Brother are each still on their warm *hu tse*, wrapped in a quilt.

Rdo rje skyid is the wife of Father's youngest brother. We are neighbors. "Rdo rje skyid! Come fetch water!" calls Mother. Rdo rje skyid quickly emerges with her bucket. If it is still dark, they use flashlights to guide them.

About fifteen minutes later they reach their destination, a small stream. The water is frozen. Using large stones, they break a hole in the ice, and fill their buckets using plastic ladles. The water does not flow quickly into the hole. With three people scooping water, they must wait several seconds for the hole to fill again.

Other neighboring women come. It is difficult for one woman to put a bucket of water on her own back so they help each other. If a woman is alone, she must find a boulder or something higher on which to perch the bucket, and then slowly pull the bucket onto her back, using both hands.

On the way back, the women laugh and talk about the weather, livestock, clothes, and village news. This is also a good chance for them to chat without men overhearing what they say.

When Brother gets up, the sun is already shining through the window. He washes his face, brushes his teeth, and puts dung in the stove before Mother and Sister-in-law return. He helps them put their buckets on the floor in rooms One and Three.

Mother then puts fresh water into twenty-one<sup>1</sup> copper *dung phor* on the table in front of the sacred images.

Brother puts some embers into a metal bucket and covers them with dung. He pours some milk and water into a ladle, puts the *bsang khug* 'incense bag' (FIGS 24) into his robe pouch and holding both the bucket and ladle, walks to a hill behind our house where the *bsang khri* 'incense altar' (FIG 14) is located, near a *dar lcog* 'prayer flags on a pole' (FIG 58).

At the *bsang khri* he puts his hat on the ground, then moving the ash to the altar puts the embers on the incense altar. The embers blaze immediately in the wind. He raises the incense bag and removing a *bsang khem* 'big spoon', puts three spoons of incense on the altar. He then pours on it water mixed with milk, flings the remainder of the milk-water mixture into the sky, and circumambulates the altar three times while entreating deities to bless people and livestock. The following approximates what he says:

ཡེ། མཚན་མོ་ཨུ་ཏུ་རྩྱ། མཚན་མོ་ཨུ་ཏུ་རྩྱ། མཚན་མོ་ཨུ་ཏུ་རྩྱ།  
 མཚན་བླ་མ་ཡི་དམ་སངས་རྒྱལ་བྱང་མཆོག་དཔལ་འཛོམས་འགྲོ་ཆོས་རྒྱུད་མ་ཡུལ་རྩ་གཞི་བདག་མགོ་ནག་གི་  
 སྐྱབས་རེ་ས། གཙམ་ས་པ་མ་འདྲ་བོ། ང་གང་སྐང་ས་ནས་ཁ་ལ་ས་དགོ་དགོས། གང་འོང་ས་ནས་བསམ་དོན་འགྲུབ་  
 དགོས། མི་ལ་ནང་ཆ་འོང་མི་ཉན། ལྷ་གས་ལ་གོང་ཁ་འོང་མི་ཉན། བཙན་གྱི་རྩི་མོ་དགུང་ལ་མཉམ་དགོས། ལྷ་གས་གྱི་  
 རུ་མ་ཐང་ལ་བརྒྱུད་དགོས། ངས་བྱུང་གང་སྐང་ས་ནས་མཚན་གྱི་ན་ཡོང། ང་ལ་མགོན་སྐྱབས་རེ་གཙོང་ས།

*Ye/ mChod Om ā hum/ mChod Om ā hum/ mChod Om ā hum*  
*mChod bla ma yi dam sangs rgyas byang sems dpa' bo mkha' 'gro*  
*chos skyong srung ma yul lha gzhi bdag/ mgo nag gi skyabs re sa/*  
*gnam sa pha ma 'dra bo/ nga gar song sa nas kha las dge dgos/ gar*  
*'ong sa nas bsam don 'grub dgos/ mi la nad tsha 'ong mi nyan/*  
*phyugs la god kha 'ong mi nyan/ btsan gyi rtse mo dgung la mnyam*  
*dgos/ phyugs kyi ru ma thang la brdal dgos/ ngas khyod gar song sa*  
*nas mchod kyin yod/ nga la mgon skyabs re gnongs/*

<sup>1</sup> Three, seven, and twenty-one are believed to be auspicious numbers. This explains the number "twenty-one", i.e., three times seven. For example, circumambulation is often done seven times.

Men call the names of buddhas, *bla ma*, and mountain deities loudly when they offer *bsang*. Women also call the same names, but not loudly. In addition, women do not go to mountain *lab rtse* (FIGS 11, 59), although more recently, female students do so, for example, before an important examination.

Father gets up last. He folds his quilt and tidies all the pillows and quilts. He sweeps the felt mats made from sheep hair on the *hu tse* with a plastic broom. Sister-in-law pours warm water into the basin for Father, who washes his face, brushes his teeth, and then goes to the sheep-shed (FIG 37) to see if any ewes have given birth.

Mother sweeps the floor (FIG 57) and corridor in our home and brings yak dung and sheep and goat pellets from outside. The milk tea is boiling by this time, sending out a plume of steam. Sister-in-law puts *rtsam pa*, dried cheese, and butter into everyone's bowl. We are then ready for breakfast. We sit round the *go kha*. Father sits on the right side of the *go kha*<sup>1</sup> closest to the stove, followed by Brother and then me. Mother and Sister-in-law sit on the left side. Sister-in-law pours milk tea into Father's bowl and offers it with both hands. She then offers tea to Brother, me, and then Mother. Younger people use both hands when they receive or offer something to older people to show respect. Meanwhile, my family's three cats approach and we feed them with food that we are eating. Conversation during the meal might include, for example, livestock; chanting; and village news such as illnesses, births, deaths, engagements, the weather, and so on. Father gives instructions about what we should do that day. We also watch TV, for example, programs featuring singing and dancing; and programs in Tibetan such as *Journey to the West*.<sup>2</sup>

At about eight-thirty, Mother takes her *bzho ze'u* (wooden milk bucket, FIG 54) and goes to milk eight female yaks. Sister-in-law carries a *sle bo* (wooden basket) (FIG 30) on her back to the yak shed where she picks up yak dung, puts it into the basket, and carries it to

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<sup>1</sup> Right, when facing the *go kha*.

<sup>2</sup> *Journey to the West* is a TV series adapted from the classic Chinese novel of the same name. First broadcast in 1986 (in Chinese) it was later dubbed in Tibetan and was extremely popular with Tibetan audiences. This program is referred to locally as Tang San Bla ma and also as Sun Wukong, after characters in the series.

the yak dung pile (FIGS 8, 32) on a small hill in front of our house. Using a stick she spreads out the wet dung so it will dry more quickly. She collects dry dung and puts it atop the pile and daubs the pile with wet dung, so it will be less likely to collapse and also appear more neat and tidy.

In winter, we divide our sheep into three flocks: ewes and their lambs, two-year-old sheep (both male and female), and ewes that did not give birth and other male sheep. Ewes that recently gave birth cannot walk quickly, lag behind the other sheep, and need a warm place to stay.

We also use a fenced pasture that we share with seven other families. How many sheep a family can put in this fenced pasture depends on how much land it owns inside the fence. We herd our two-year-old sheep and yaks in our own, separately fenced pasture on the mountain.

Father and Brother go to the sheep-shed and feed chaff mixed with dried grass to the very thin sheep and ewes that recently gave birth. We keep ewes that ignore their lambs in the sheep-shed the whole day. Mother feeds them and holds them so that their lambs can nurse.

The eight families that share the fenced pasture have to limit their time in this pasture. They must herd the livestock to the fenced area (FIG 12) at ten-thirty AM and lead them out by five PM, otherwise the grass will not be able to re-grow. There is nowhere else to herd the livestock. Heavy snow spells disaster on highland pastures in winter. Mother and Grandmother told me about a very bad winter when, after a month of heavy snow, half of the family's livestock of 800 sheep, 110 yaks, and twenty-five calves died.

At around ten-thirty, Father wraps his face and neck in a thick scarf and herds the ewes into the shared, fenced pasture (FIG 36). He cannot herd two sheep flocks at the same time because the path is too narrow so Brother herds the second flock into the fenced pasture after Father. After returning home, Brother leads the third flock to the fenced pasture on the mountain that belongs to my family. One or two hours later, he again returns home.

In the meantime, Mother finishes milking, puts the milk bucket in Room Four, herds the yaks into the fenced pasture on the mountain



half a kilometer from our home, and returns home. She prepares food for our two dogs that are fed three times a day. She puts flour and bread in a metal bucket, adds water, heats it, and pours it into two basins - one for each dog. Lambs and thin sheep that die are skinned, chopped up, and also fed to the dogs.

Sister-in-law fetches water again. We need a lot of water for the sheep that are kept at home. The other sheep are watered once every two or three days at water sources near or within their respective pastures.

Next, Mother and Sister-in-law go into the sheep-shed with two loose wool bags. With brooms they sweep the dung into small piles, collecting it in the bags (FIG 25) that they empty onto a pile of sheep dung.<sup>1</sup> This takes about one and a half hours.

## Afternoon

After cleaning the sheep-shed, Mother and Sister-in-law prepare lunch, which is often potatoes fried with meat, bread (FIG 44), and black tea. At about one-thirty, Brother returns from herding sheep. We rest after lunch and chat, or do what we like, for example, wash clothes, wash our hair, sit on the porch, and drink tea. If any sheep have died, Mother skins them and puts the skins on a wall inside the porch to dry. She also chops up dead lambs to feed the dogs.

Father herds the sheep all day, chanting, and chatting with other herdsmen. He does not come home for lunch,<sup>2</sup> because lambs will run to other flocks if they are unattended. Lambs might also sleep in a warm place and not follow their mothers or jump into water no matter how cold the weather is. Foxes are also a danger. Local Tibetans no longer wear fur, especially fox-skin hats and consequently, with fewer fox hunters, the fox population has increased.

At about four-thirty, Sister-in-law prepares *chas*. She mixes dried grass, chaff, and water on a big piece of plastic, in preparation for feeding the sheep (FIG 13). This requires about thirty minutes.

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<sup>1</sup>After it dries, this dung is put inside a walled enclosure about half a meter tall that is made of yak dung (FIG 9).

<sup>2</sup> In winter, Father, like many herders, does not eat or drink anything until returning home for supper.

Meanwhile, Mother pours water in a '*gu tse* (kettle or pitcher) from the copper bowls on the *mchod khri* in front of the *chos sgam* (scripture cabinet), goes outside, and pours the water on a hill behind the house to ensure that this sacred water is in a higher, unpolluted location. She returns to the house and puts the copper bowls on a porch shelf. Next, she makes dough, puts it into a big metal pot with the lid on, and covers it with embers. Thirty minutes later we have baked bread. Next, she takes some meat from the *lci sgam* 'yak dung freezer' (FIG 47) and leaves it to thaw near the stove so that it will be easy to chop later for meals. We rarely use our home freezer in winter, because meat kept in the yak dung freezer is tastier than that kept in the home freezer and the cold winter temperatures ensure it stays frozen.

Sister-in-law goes to the mountain and drives the yaks to the small river from which we fetch our household water. The yaks need water every day while the sheep just every second day. Sister-in-law then leaves the yaks at the river, returns to the fenced pasture on the mountain, and drives the sheep in this pasture back home. Sister-in-law and Mother then put *chas* into the troughs to feed these sheep.

Brother goes to help Father with the herding. They sort the sheep into three flocks. Brother herds one flock back home where Mother and Sister-in-law feed them. Meanwhile, Father stays with the other two flocks on the pasture. Brother then returns to the pasture and herds another flock home. By this time, Mother and Sister-in-law have finished feeding the first group of sheep and have put feed in the troughs for the second flock. Finally, Father brings home the third flock home, which is also fed. Feeding the sheep is difficult, because they bolt for the troughs as soon as they smell *chas*. At least three people are needed for this process, which takes about two hours in total.

After feeding the sheep, Brother goes to collect the yaks from the river and herds them back home. Mother yaks with calves are also fed. Brother and Sister-in-law tie the yaks to a *gdang* 'rope with a peg at each end' staked in the earth. Tied to each *gdang* are about ten *rtsa lo* 'short rope loops'. A *ske thig* 'rope put around yaks' necks' features a round piece of wood on one end of a yak hair rope. A *cha ri* 'short round piece of wood' is attached to the rope. The *cha ri* is fastened securely to the *gdang*.

Every winter in about the tenth lunar month when it is very cold, we put a *kheb* 'thick pad' on the mother yaks' backs at night to keep them warm, and remove it in the morning. The pads are made from old clothes that we no longer wear. Grandmother cuts our old clothes and sews them together so they form a thick pad. A rope is sewn to the pads. When the pad is put on the yaks, the rope is tied around the pad and tied at the top. Horses are treated the same way when it is very cold. *Kheb* are no longer used in the late second lunar month.

### Evening

Tired from herding his two flocks, which gives him little time to rest, Father rests by the stove once he is back home. Mother gives him *rtsam pa* and bread, pours tea in a bowl, and then offers *tsha gsur*. After putting embers on a square earth *tsha gsur* in front of our house, she puts *rtsam pa* and butter on top as an offering for *dri bza'* 'odor eaters.'<sup>1</sup>

Father turns on the TV and watches Tibetan language news, the weather report, and singing and dancing programs. Brother offers incense again as he did in the morning. Mother and Sister-in-law cook dinner, which is usually noodles and mutton. Sometimes we have boiled beef for dinner. We rarely have vegetables. We have dinner together at about nine PM. Sister-in-law scoops noodles into bowls and Father cuts and divides the meat among those present. After dinner, Mother feeds the dogs with the leftovers. Father sits on the *hu tse* and watches TV. Sometimes he watches Chinese-language TV programs. Mother does not like to watch TV because she says that she does not want to see people killing each other. Instead, she prefers to wipe the copper offering bowls with a clean towel while chanting. Sometimes she goes to Grandmother's home which is adjacent to ours, and chats. The rest of us sit around the stove and watch TV.

Around ten-thirty, four or five boys and young men between fifteen to twenty-seven years of age often come to my home (FIGS 3, 34, 35) to chat or watch TV. Father kindly welcomes them. They sit around the stove and talk about women, buying and selling sheep and yaks,

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<sup>1</sup> A class of deities on the plane of sensory desires that live on fragrances (<http://bit.ly/2HoVCec>, accessed 25 June 2014).

whose horse is fastest, cars and motorcycles, the weather, the condition of the grassland, marriage, and romantic relationships. Brother and I offer tea to our visitors.

Similarly, Brother often visits neighbors to chat with older boys and young men where they are not being supervised by old people. I often visit Grandmother and whoever is in her home.

Sister-in-law may visit Grandmother, watch TV with us, or go to bed early. Local young women generally do not leave their home in the evenings other than to visit nearby relatives.

Mother often goes to bed at about eleven PM, while the rest of us go to bed at about midnight. After adding more sheep pellets to the stove to make it easier to start a fire the next morning, Sister-in-law also goes to bed.

## SUMMER

In summer, the male heads of household gather, either informally while herding, or at a home to discuss the time to set off for the mountain pastures. The families are expected to take their yaks and sheep to the mountains to ensure that all the local families share the mountain pasture equally. Furthermore, all the livestock are expected to leave the winter pasture within a few days of each other to protect individual fenced pastures from being grazed by others' livestock.

Families stay on the mountains for about only forty-five days because, by this time, the grass has been heavily grazed by the approximately 450 yaks and 4,000 sheep that have been brought here.

The night before leaving our fixed home, Father, Brother, and I put pack frames on about five yaks that are veteran pack animals. Around seven-thirty the next morning, we load the pack yaks with clothes, a pot, a kettle, bedding, chopsticks, bowls, two or three thermoses, *rtsam pa*, wheat flour, bread, salt, tea, sugar, a small solar electricity generating panel that powers a small light in the tent and charges mobile phones, a milk bucket, a churn, ropes, a radio, about three mobile phones, a *ras gur* 'white cloth tent', *sha skam* 'dry yak meat', and so on. We also prepare a motorcycle that we ride to the base

of the mountain and park for safe-keeping in the home of a nearby family.

After the usual breakfast, we start off. Grandmother is sad to see us leave. Mother comes with us and helps pitch the cloth tent and makes the stove using various sized rectangular stones and mud. Two or three days later, she returns to the winter house and stays with Grandmother.

We camp on a mountain that has thick forests where people may easily become lost if they are unfamiliar with the local area. Around us are also big rocky mountains. Because it is easy to slide down the mountains on gravel deposits and suffer injuries, parents forbid their children from going there. About fifteen families live here in summer. There are no fences on the mountains.

We use *ras gur* 'cloth tents' on the mountain. There is no flat land; therefore, a tent base must be made by digging away soil to create a level area. We generally put our tent in the same place year after year. When viewed from a distance, the cloth tents resemble giant mushrooms.

The tent is narrow at the top and wide at the bottom and requires three poles. After pitching the tent, we cover it with a large piece of plastic to keep it drier when it rains. The plastic is fastened to the tent by throwing ropes over it, pulling them tight, and tying them to tent pegs. This prevents the plastic from blowing away. Stones are put around the tent to prevent wind from blowing inside.

In the past, *phying pa* 'felt cloth' (FIG 26) was used as a raincoat during rainy weather, but now commercially available plastic raincoats are used. I used a *phying pa* made by Grandmother when I was a child. It was warm and kept me dry.

The soil on the mountain is wet. To keep us dry, *spen ma* 'tamarisk' branches are collected, put on the earth, and covered with thick plastic over which cushions are scattered. This is the sitting and sleeping area.

Women usually make a stove with flat stones and mud. How well the stove is made is a topic of conversation among families, particularly among the women. Consequently, families boast that their stove is made well.

*Bsang khri* and *tsha gsur* are also made with stones, because it is easy to make a fire on the stones. The *bsang khri* is always in a higher position than the *tsha gsur*.

Since 2011 when Brother married, Father, Brother, and Sister-in-law have gone to the mountains. Before Brother's marriage, Mother also lived with them on the mountains and in Ston sa during summer.

In 2011, there were fifteen families camped on the mountain. They divided into four groups with three or four families per group. Each group put their tents in a circle. At night, the sheep were kept in the center of the circle, surrounded by the yaks. The calves were tethered to a wooden peg with a *be'u thig* tied around their front leg to prevent them from suckling their mothers. The *be'u thig* were swapped between the right and left legs on alternate nights to avoid injury to the calf. Generally, the mother yaks do not approach their tied calves. If they do, then they are tied to *rdang* away from their calves. *Lug lhas* refers to the circle of sheep, which are neither tied nor enclosed inside a fence. *Nor lhas* refers to the place where the yaks are kept. This arrangement protects the sheep from wolf attacks and also against thieves. In addition, each family usually brings a dog to protect the livestock and herders.

Thieves, generally Tibetans from neighboring villages, try to sneak into the area undetected when it is dark or foggy, herd the stolen sheep to the county town, and sell them to Muslim or Han butchers. Wolves, considered very clever, can also attack sheep at night during foggy weather, therefore, after dinner, men often go outside the tents and shout to frighten away both wolves and thieves.

### Morning

Sister-in-law gets up at about six AM, puts on her robe, washes her face, and brushes her teeth. To prepare the fire she uses the firewood piled by the stove, on top of which she puts *spen ma* 'dried plants' and yak dung. Using a cigarette lighter, she sets the dung on fire. After boiling water in a pot on the stove, Sister-in-law washes her hands again. Taking a wooden bucket, she goes to the *nor lhas* to milk. Some female yaks return from grazing and lie by their calves. These yaks are tied to the *gdang*. A yak's calf is untied and allowed to nurse for two or three

minutes, and then tied again. After the yak is milked, the calf is allowed to nurse for about ten minutes, and then tied again.

Brother gets up after Sister-in-law, dresses, washes his face, brushes his teeth, and then goes to collect the female yaks that did not return. They are usually near our tent. He uses an '*ur cha* (sling) to help herd them home, where he ties them to the *gdang*. He then offers *bsang* on the *bsang khri* behind the cloth tent on a large flat stone and offers *tsha gsur* on another stone in front of our cloth tent. The ritual is the same as in our winter home and on the autumn pasture (FIG 17).

Sister-in-law milks about fifteen female yaks in total. After all are milked, they are untied, and Brother herds them to nearby valleys. The location may vary depending on where the grass is more plentiful.

After the female yaks are driven away, Sister-in-law unties the calves and guides them to the nearby tents. The male yaks are allowed to graze freely.

Collecting yaks and milking is relatively easy on a sunny day but, if it is rainy or foggy, it may be difficult to locate the yaks. Summer is often rainy and the place where the yaks are tied is muddy. Sister-in-law must wear rubber boots when she milks. It is difficult to pull and tie the calves in the mud.

Father gets up last. He dresses, folds the quilts and cushions and puts them around the inside base of the cloth tent to keep out the wind. He then goes to the *lug lhas* and separates our sheep from other families' sheep. The sheep generally separate automatically when the herdsmen call, "'Ao ho! 'Ao ho! 'Ao ho!" If they do not, Father spends about an hour separating them. Meanwhile, Brother returns and helps Father count our sheep to make sure none are missing.

At about eight, we have a breakfast of bread, milk tea, and *ja kha*<sup>1</sup> or *rtsam pa*. We chat about where there is good grass and water for livestock. After breakfast, Father herds our sheep to the best grass. He takes his prayer beads and chants while herding.

Brother herds the yaks a bit further from home, and then goes to find the male yaks. We do not bring the male yaks back to our camp.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ja kha* is similar to *rtsam pa*. Roasted barley, dry cheese, and butter is put in a bowl. Hot tea is added and the ring finger is used to mix the ingredients, although some women use their index finger. The resulting mixture is drier than *rtsam pa*.

Instead, Brother takes them to a place where there is good grass and then collects them once every three or four days. Wolves do not attack male yaks, so we do not worry much about them. Brother also goes with other herdsmen to collect yaks.

Sister-in-law feeds our dog and then unties the calves and drives them to a place near our tent where she can watch them. Children often herd calves, but my family has no child who can watch the calves on the mountain. Sister-in-law must therefore watch them.

Next, Sister-in-law puts the yak dung together, pressing some against the earth with her shovel to make it as thin as possible. The surface side is dry one or two days later at which time Sister-in-law turns it over so that the other side will dry. A day later, she brings this *kho shog* 'pieces of dry yak dung' home. Next she goes to the *lug lhas* to collect sheep dung. She must do this early or other women will collect all of it.

A *khem* 'winnowing shovel' is used to winnow sheep dung. Only women do this work. It often rains on the mountain, sometimes for as many as ten consecutive days, so there are few chances to collect dry sheep dung. It is impossible to collect fuel if it rains. Consequently, we collect as much as we can on sunny days.

Sister-in-law returns to the kitchen to make butter. She warms the milk in a pot, pours it back into the churn, adds some *zho* (yogurt), and starts churning with the '*o* *khör* (churn handle). She also prepares lunch.

## Afternoon

We have lunch at about twelve-thirty, when Father and Brother return from herding. We have bread, *rtsam pa*, and sometimes, fried green peppers or, eggplants with meat, and milk tea.

After lunch, Father listens to the radio. Sometimes he naps. Young people Brother's age like to gather on a hill and play cards or chat. We do not have to stay with the livestock all day on the mountain. Sheep are herded to an area where there is good grass. When they are full, they are brought back near the tent where they can be easily watched. Consequently, because there are no fences, herding here is much easier than in the winter pasture, where the sheep must be



watched constantly in fear they will cross fences into another family's pasture.

Brother sometimes collects firewood after lunch. In the afternoon, Sister-in-law feeds our dog again, bakes bread and, about once every two days, churns milk. Butter forms after about three hours of intermittently churning and doing chores. Sister-in-law removes the butter, puts it into cold water in the milk bucket for about one to two hours, slaps it with her hands to remove excess water, and stores the butter in a basin.

Next, she boils *da ra* 'liquid in the churn after removing the butter' in a pot and pours it into a *chur sgye* 'cheesecloth' (FIG 27) hanging from a small pole set across two forked poles outside the tent. A basin catches *chur khu* 'whey' underneath the cheesecloth. The next morning, she removes the cheese and spreads it on a big piece of plastic and, on a sunny day, dries it. When it is not sunny, the cheese remains in the bag for drying later when sunny. Dried cheese is stored in coarse bags of either plastic or yak skin.

Sister-in-law also fetches water in the afternoon from a stream near our tents. We often have *ja lhag* 'tea extra', which is a meal of bread and milk tea at about five PM. Afterwards, Father herds the sheep back near our home. Meanwhile, Sister-in-law gathers the calves and ties them. At the same time, Brother herds the female yaks back home and ties them. Sister-in-law milks them in the same way as she did in the morning. Meanwhile, Brother offers *bsang* and *tsha gsur*. After Sister-in-law finishes milking, Brother herds the female yaks to graze in a valley and then returns to the tent.

## Evening

We use solar-powered light at night. Some families use candles. Sister-in-law prepares dinner, which is often noodles cooked in beef or noodle soup, and sometimes we also eat pieces of mutton with the noodles. Sister-in-law washes the bowls and pot after dinner and feeds our dog for the third time.

Later, Brother might visit other families and play cards. Father listens to the radio. We go to bed at about eleven.

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Butter and Salt

Father often visits Mother and Grandmother. He walks to our motorcycle carrying the butter and cheese in bags over his shoulder. If what he carries is too heavy, he loads the articles onto a horse, and rides it to the motorcycle. The times of his departure and return are flexible, and often depend on the weather. When he returns he brings mutton, dried beef, *rtsam pa*, bread, and vegetables.

Mother and Grandmother deal with the butter together. The butter to be stored is put in cold water and allowed to sit for about half an hour. The pieces of butter to be stored have different consistencies because they have been exposed to the air for different lengths of time.

Butter is commonly stored in clean, dried, sheep stomachs. Before butter is stored, the dried stomach is soaked in water for about half an hour. If butter of different consistencies is put into the sheep stomach in this condition, there will be empty places between the different chunks of butter. To prevent this, the butter is soaked again and pounded by hand on a flat stone, ensuring the butter is of equal consistency. Pounding the butter also removes excess water and ensures the butter will not spoil. Mother takes the pounded pieces of butter and uses her fist to press them inside the sheep stomach. When full, the stomach is sewn up and stored in Room Three.

We must herd livestock twice a month near a stream so our livestock can have salt from both the stream and from the mud near the stream. Typically, we start off at nine in the morning and start to return at about four. The stream runs across a shared grassland. The many fences in this area create narrow lanes through which the livestock must pass. This is difficult work because the livestock try to enter the fenced pasture in order to graze and must be constantly watched. When the livestock arrive, they lick the salty mud and drink salty water from the stream. They are allowed to stay for three or four hours. Although they also try to graze, the area is very overgrazed and unable to provide much forage.

Grandmother and Mother at the Winter House in Summer

Grandmother and Mother live in our winter house all year round, guarding it and our property. Thieves are common and may steal coral, silver ornaments, gold earrings, televisions, motorcycles, and so on from unattended homes.

### Morning

Mother gets up about seven-thirty, does about one hundred prostrations, fetches water and, upon returning, milks our three female goats. Then Grandmother gets up and prepares breakfast. She also offers *mchod pa*,<sup>1</sup> *bsang*, and *tsha gsur*. They have *rtsam pa*, bread, and milk tea for breakfast, and feed our cats with left-overs. After breakfast, Mother goes to the sheep-shed and covers the nannies' udders with a *nu kheb* (udder cover) that prevents the kids from nursing. The *nu kheb* has four strings - one at each corner - that are tied together on top of the goat's back. Then the goats are allowed to go outside.

Mother and Grandmother take *zor ba* (sickles, FIG 41) to cut vegetation that grows near our house and the sheep-shed. When dry, the cut plants are stored in the *rstwa khung* (grass room).

Once every three to five days, Mother climbs the mountain in the morning, examines our fence, and collects mushrooms. Sometimes livestock from neighbor villages on the mountain trespass on our fenced pastures, which is why Mother does this inspection.

### Afternoon

At about twelve-thirty we have a lunch of bread, black tea, and sometimes mushrooms fried with mutton. We do not often go outside at this time because it is hot. Instead, we stay inside and soften sheepskins and lambskins. After being soaked in *ldar*<sup>2</sup> for about ten

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<sup>1</sup> *Mchod pa*: an offering of water in copper bowls put in front of religious images.

<sup>2</sup> *Da ra*: liquid that remains after removing butter from a churn. The *da ra* is boiled until cheese forms. The cheese is removed. The remaining liquid is *chur khu*, which is put in a wooden bucket. Salt, a bit of chaff, and some *da*

days, the skins are removed, dried for three or four days in Room Three, returned to the *ldar* for a few hours, and then softened with *gnam shad*.<sup>1</sup> Skins are softened with *pags shad*<sup>2</sup> (FIG 42) about two days later. When very smooth, the skins are softened with both hands, and sometimes rubbed with a rough stone to further soften them.

Grandmother and Mother also make ropes, *rtsa lo*,<sup>3</sup> *ske thig*,<sup>4</sup> and *be'u thig*,<sup>5</sup> with both yak hair and sheep wool (FIG 53). They give them to Father to replace the old ropes. Grandmother also makes sheepskin robes (FIG 2), although the last one I remember making was in 2001.

If it is not hot outside in the afternoon, Mother and Grandmother collect dried plants and put them in the *rtswa khung* (grass house). In winter, we used to beat the stalked plants with a wooden stick and then fed them to sheep and yaks. Now, however, we use a machine to chop the plants. When it gets dark the goats come back. Mother ties them in the sheep-shed and milks them. Grandmother offers *bsang* and *tsha gsur*.

## Night

For dinner, Mother cooks noodles which she also feeds to our cats. After dinner, she washes the bowls and pot and makes bread that she gives to Father when he returns from herding on the mountain. Grandmother wipes the copper water-offering bowls with a clean cloth and then chants *ma Ni* while turning a hand prayer wheel (FIG 56). Mother prostrates and chants after making bread and then both go to bed at about eleven.

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*ra* are added. Skins are then put in a bucket of this mixture, which is now called *ldar*.

<sup>1</sup> *Gnam shad*: a tool for softening skins made of a forked tree branch with a metal blade between the forks.

<sup>2</sup> *Pags shad*: a wooden tool resembling a thin saw that is used to soften skins.

<sup>3</sup> *Rtsa lo*: a short rope tied to a *rdang*, which is a long rope that has a peg on each end. There are about ten *rtsa lo* tied to a *rdang*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ske thig*: a rope tied around a yak's neck and ~~the~~ short wooden stick sewed to it.

<sup>5</sup> *Be'u thig*: a short rope made of yak hair tied around a calf's foot and tied to a peg.

## STON SA

Around eight AM we pack and set out for Ston sa, arriving some ten hours later at about six. Mother brings us hot tea and bread from our winter home. She comes on foot. There is no time to make the stove that night as we must quickly pitch the cloth tent and move everything inside. We do not tie the yaks that night, because they are hungry and need to graze. Father grazes the sheep for some hours and then herds them back, otherwise they madly run here and there when they see fresh grass. We put mats on the earth, bring quilts, and go to bed soon after eating bread and tea for supper.

Each family has their own *mtsher sa* 'tent site' on the mountain and at Ston sa. If the stove from the year before is salvageable, it is repaired, and a new stove is not needed. We use the old stove if it has not destroyed by rain or children. However, if a new stove is necessary, the next morning, Mother and Sister-in-law make it from sod bricks they cut from the grassland with a shovel. They strengthen the stove with mud and then thrust *rdang* into the earth. Father makes a square, earthen incense altar behind the tent, and makes a square *tsha gsur* in front of the tent. Brother herds our livestock. Mother (FIG 18) and Sister-in-law milk the yaks. Mother returns to our winter home two or three days later.

A challenge in autumn is the lack of water. We typically water the yaks every day. At noon, we set out for a spring. Along the way, we must guide the yaks through narrow lanes between fenced pastures. After about an hour we reach the spring. We start back an hour later when the livestock have had enough water. This is an unpleasant daily experience because about ten families water their livestock at the same spring. Consequently, the spring is surrounded by livestock struggling to get to the head of the spring where the water is colder and cleaner. Although there is no generally agreed upon herding schedule among local families, sheep are typically watered in the morning and yaks in the afternoon. We water our sheep once every one or two days.

Life on the autumn pasture is, in many ways, easier than on the mountains. The grassland is level and so it is easy to walk around, and the many different colorful flowers that grow there make it beautiful. Delicious wild mushrooms are collected, cooked, and eaten, which

adds variety to our diet. Motorcycles and cars can be easily driven here. Young people often herd sheep and yaks with motorcycles. Fog does not often cover the grassland and there is less fear of wolf attacks.

There are some tent shops on the grassland that sell fruits, snacks, drinks, and clothes. Beautiful clothes are often worn because most of the community's young people congregate here, and there are many activities, for example, horse races and song competitions. In many other ways, however, daily life is almost the same as on the mountains.

We return to our winter home when the weather turns cold in late autumn and the grassland becomes yellow. Much of the grass is gone by this time and the pasture where our winter home is located is the only place where our livestock can access pasture with grass for winter. It is very important to count all the livestock and ensure that none are missing before we set off for our winter home. Everybody is up by around six AM and help pack after breakfast. The autumn pasture is near the winter home so my family members are very relaxed about this short journey. However, those whose winter home is far away get up earlier and often worry about the weather. If it is too hot both livestock and people will be thirsty and suffer from a long walk and if it rains, moving is also difficult.

Brother and Father start to pack around seven AM and finish around ten AM. Mother, Father, and Sister-in-law herd the yaks while Brother rides our motorcycle, herding the sheep to the winter home. This takes about three hours.

Life on the grassland is enjoyable in various ways, but there are also many challenges. I describe one of these challenges in the account below.

#### Account Four

It was in late autumn in 2013 when my family, as usual, moved back to our winter house. My family chose about twenty sheep and my uncle's family chose about 40 sheep to herd in our fenced pasture where there was plenty of grass. My family planned to sell them when they got fat so that we could earn more money. This is what most families do in my

village. At night, my family and Uncle's family put those sheep with other sheep in a big yard in front of our houses, which are very near each other.

One night, Father was not at home. The next morning, Brother and Uncle separated our sheep and counted them. Forty sheep were missing. Three people's tracks were at the gate of the yard. My family's relatives came and tracked the thieves, but all traces disappeared about one kilometer from my home. We did not know in which direction the thieves had taken our sheep.

Father then asked a monk for a divination. Father and Uncle drove Uncle bKra shis rgya mtsho's car to Khri ka County and Zi ling, looking for the sheep. They did not find them. Uncle Rdo rje thar and another man also went to Gcan tsha County Town looking for the sheep, but returned empty-handed.

Brother and some other young men made two groups and went to the main roads of Khri ka and Gcan tsha counties by car every night for about a week and quietly waited, hoping to meet the thieves with our sheep. They thought that the thieves might go to a county town to sell the sheep. The thieves never appeared.

We guessed that the thieves were very familiar with our family and knew that Father was not at home. Livestock were stolen from some other families that year, too. Villagers hesitantly wondering, "Maybe the thieves in our village and neighbor villages are cooperating. Otherwise how would thieves from other villages know which family has fat sheep that are easy to steal?"

When thieves steal livestock at night, they put them in a secluded place that night, and then load the livestock into a truck and take them to a county town the next night. Those stolen sheep were worth at least 23,000 RMB. After this theft, we took greater care of our livestock. Grandmother said:

I was really worried about this loss, but now I am not. We tried as hard as we could to find them, but we didn't find them. Maybe we owed some sheep to those thieves in our previous life. Now forget them. Stealing happens to most families sooner or later.

Locals often discuss change. Daily life today is quite different from the way it was during my childhood. Fifteen years ago, my family

had four horses. Today we have none. There were no bicycles, motorcycles, cars, TVs, and phones. People made clothes for themselves. Women spent significant time making yarn (FIGS 21, 22, 23) and various ropes while herding. Children played games together when they were herding calves for their families. All the family members chatted and chanted after dinner. Children also learned many folktales and riddles from their grandparents and would tell them to other children in the home to compete to see who could tell the most after dinner and when they went to bed.

Today, people have more money and buy motorcycles and cars. Since electricity came to my community in about 2007, locals have bought televisions, phones, refrigerators, and washing machines. Most children now attend school and never tell each other folktales. People spend less time interacting with each other at night. Instead, they watch TV, or are busy with their phones.

Daily life has been deeply impacted by all these new changes. Some locals have bought houses and live in the county town. Assignment of a certain amount of land limits the number of livestock a family can own and has created more conflict between families because of a sense of land ownership. In 2014, locals believe that there are neighboring areas where herders are paid salaries to herd for the government and no longer their own livestock - all in the name of protecting the environment. Locals worry that they will eventually have to move to busy, crowded towns.

TRANSITIONS: 2014-2017

Since writing about daily life in 2013, much has changed with enforcement of a resettlement policy, near universal education for children, and economic changes in Gcan tsha thang. From 2014-2017, I was away at university and only able to visit my home during summer and winter holidays. I often asked my parents and friends about local news. They offered brief descriptions but were unable to explain why change was happening. Father mentioned that construction was ongoing and that all the families in Ma Ni thang<sup>1</sup> would receive 10,000

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<sup>1</sup> Ma Ni thang is the cultural and economic center of Gcan tsha thang Township. Stores, the township school, and clinic are located here. It is also



RMB from the government because they would have to resettle. He said, "I have heard that Ma Ni thang is becoming a city."

I was on school holiday in the summer of 2017 so visited Gcan tsha thang. There was no public transportation from the county town to my community. Father met me in the county town to take me home. He drove a small car, one of the cheapest for sale in China. As we passed though Ma Ni thang where I attended primary school, many blurry childhood memories came to me. The old primary school rooms had been demolished and replaced with a new five-floor building. The local main road was under construction. All the local stores and neighbors around the school (FIG 33) in Ma Ni thang were gone (FIG 62). Father pointed to some white tents in Ma Ni thang and reported that some families had resettled there (FIG 63).

A petrol station had been built in Ma Ni thang, which was dusty from passing trucks and machines involved in construction work. Most construction workers were Chinese, although a few were locals. Father said that the men earned one hundred RMB a day, while the women were paid eighty RMB.

I was very surprised to see several thousand square meters of pastureland covered with solar panels (FIGS 60 and 61). Father said that about fifteen households had sold their pastureland to a company that planned to sell electricity to the government. Many stories about this solar panel projects were circulating when I got home. Grandmother was upset. She said:

Do those families not know what they are doing? You don't sell your homeland for money. I don't know how much money those families are receiving, however, it doesn't matter now, because the money will only last for a few years. What matters is the other people in the community and future generations of this community. This land is passed down from generation to generation and we cannot sell it to others for some money.

Father interrupted:

Who knows what will happen to this land? It is very much up to the government. When the government wants the land, they probably won't pay you if they don't want to. Maybe it's a better idea to sell it for a high price when you can.

Concern over selling land, resettlement, and ongoing construction in Ma Ni thang are major concerns for locals. I learned that 500 households who were receiving *dibao* 'basic living allowance'<sup>1</sup> would be provided new houses in Ma Ni thang and then would be required to move there once the houses were complete.

When I asked about what was happening in Ma Ni thang, I heard the following comments, expressed with uncertainty: "Ma Ni thang is going to become a city." "A railroad from Zi ling through Rma lho will pass through the center of Gcan tsha thang."

Mother no longer goes to the mountains in the summer. Instead, she stays at the winter home with Grandmother and cares for her grandsons. This was my first time (2017) seeing my brother's second son. My parents are eager to send their two grandchildren to kindergarten, suggesting that their understanding of the value of education has changed as compared to the time when I was a child. I ran away from home twice in order to go to school because my parents were convinced I should stay at home, herd livestock, and not attend school.

Father told me that he planned to sell half of our family's livestock because the grassland in Gcan tsha thang is now fenced and grassland degradation is severe, which makes it difficult to herd livestock as a livelihood.

Father bought an apartment in the county town where my parents plan to move and care for their grandsons while they attend school there. This will leave only Brother and Sister-in-law in Gcan tsha thang. This arrangement typifies many Gcan tsha thang families with the grandparents moving to the county town to send their

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<sup>1</sup> This Chinese term refers to financial aid in the amount of about 50,000 RMB annually from the government to families that are considered poor.

grandchildren to school, because the local primary school is noted for its poor quality (Sangs rgyas bkra shis 2017). My parents were not sure about what they would do once they moved to the county town besides making sure their grandsons attended school.

FIG 1. In front of my family's winter home. The mountains to the left in the distance are where yaks and sheep are herded in summer.



FIG 2. I wear Grandfather's (1942-1992) sheepskin robe that Grandmother made (Gur mgon skyabs 2014).



<sup>1</sup> All photos taken by Sangs rgyas bkra shis in 2014 unless otherwise stated.

FIG 3. My home and nearby landscape in summer.



FIG 4. Camping and herding on the mountains in summer (Rin chen rgyal 2013).





FIG 5. *Ya ru* 'two-year-old yaks' and their mothers (Rin chen rgyal 2013).



FIG 6. Right to left: Klu mo tshe ring, Gcod pa don 'grub, Rin chen rgyal, Ban de rgyal, Pa lo skyid (kneeling), G.yang 'dzoms lha mo (b. 2009), and Rdo rje skyid.



FIG 7. Scripture cabinet in my home.



FIG 8. Yak dung is collected, dried, and stacked here, about fifty meters behind our home.



FIG 9. Sheep dung is winnowed to remove the fine, dry powder which, when burned, only smolders, giving off much smoke. The dust from the winnowing collects (foreground) and is put in bags (background). Later, Chinese friends from Khri ka come, take the bags back home in trucks, and use the pellet powder for fertilizer. This gift of fertilizer is part of a mutually beneficial relationship between our family and these Chinese families. Rdo rje skyid uses a thin board to fill bags with sheep dung.



FIG 10. Mother, Sister-in-law, and two neighbors fetch water at about six-thirty AM.





FIG 11. Gser chen Lab rtse (Rin chen rgyal 2013).



FIG 12. My family's sheep being driven to the shared, fenced pasture.



FIG 13. Feeding *chas* to sheep near our winter home.



FIG 14. Incense altar in Ston sa.



FIG 15. Father and Mother unpacking a yak on the autumn pasture.



FIG 16. My family on the autumn pasture.



FIG 17. Autumn pasture.





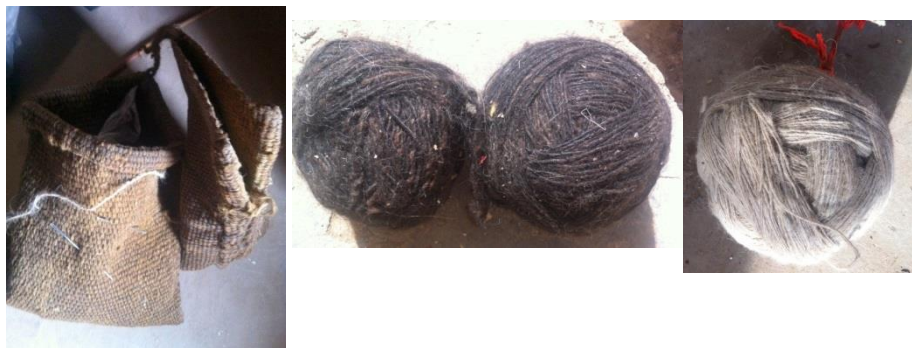
FIG 18. Mother milking one of our yaks on the autumn pasture.



FIG 19. Father, putting up fencing on the autumn pasture.



FIGS 20, 21, and 22. (L) *Ka mo* 'bags' woven by Grandmother using a '*thag* 'loom'. Historically they were used primarily to store tea. Now, nobody makes them in my family. Instead, we use plastic bags and metal containers to store tea. Bags, blankets, tent sections, and mats were woven in the past, however, Grandmother and Mother, who can both can weave well, no longer do so because it is easy and convenient to purchase these articles or their substitutes (Sangs rgyas bkra shis 2014). (C) Balls of yarn from yak hair spun by Mother and Grandmother (2014, Sangs rgyas bkra shis). (R) *Gru gu* 'ball of yarn' from sheep wool spun by Mother and Grandmother.



FIGS 23 and 24. (L) '*Phang* for spinning wool and yak hair into yarn used by Mother and Grandmother. They rarely use it today. (R) An incense bag hangs from a pole in Room One.



FIGS 25 and 26. (L) Mother and Grandmother weave *sgye* 'woven bags' that are used to store dung, dried chopped grass, and barley grain. (R) *Phying pa* made by Grandmother.



FIGS 27 and 28. (L) A *chur sgye* 'cheesecloth' often hangs from a pole that now has a drying sweater. (R) *Sgyo* 'yak skin bags' containing wheat flour.





FIG 29. A *khem* 'winnowing shovel' is used to winnow sheep dung. Only women do this work.



FIGS 30 and 31. (L) *Sle bo*, used to carry dung for fuel to our home. (R) Ash pile near my home.



FIG 32. Yak dung piled and drying near my home.



FIG 33. Re bltos bca' sdod (Fuheji xiao) School in Ma Ni thang.



FIG 34. My home is to the right of this photo. The mountains in the distance are where we herd in summer.





FIG 35. My home and nearby landscape in summer (2014, Rin chen rgyal).



FIG 36. Sheep are driven to the shared fenced pasture.



FIG 37. My family's sheep-shed.



FIG 38. Driving our family's yaks to our fenced pasture on the mountain in winter.



FIGS 39 and 40. Lambskins dry in the corridor of our home. A *sdud ma* 'broom' is used to sweep sheep dung.



FIGS 41 and 42. (L) Sickle used to cut plants that are dried, cut up, and later fed to sheep. (R) *Pags shad* used to soften skins.





FIGS 43 and 44. (R) Churn used by Mother, Sister-in-law, and Grandmother. (L) *Go re* (bread made mainly from flour and water) and *go re gcus ru ma* (bread made from flour, water, and turmeric). Mother baked this bread.



FIGS 45 and 46. (L) Cooking area in Room One. (R) My family often eats meals together while sitting near the *go kha*.



FIGS 47 and 48. (L) Yak dung freezer. (R) Glasses and bowls are kept on cabinet shelves. Chopsticks, knives, and spoons are in the drawers.



FIG 49. Room Three features a freezer, wall cupboards, a television, and a washing machine.



FIGS 50 and 51. (L) Scripture cabinet in my home. (R) The *hu tse* in Room Three. The scripture cabinet is to the left.

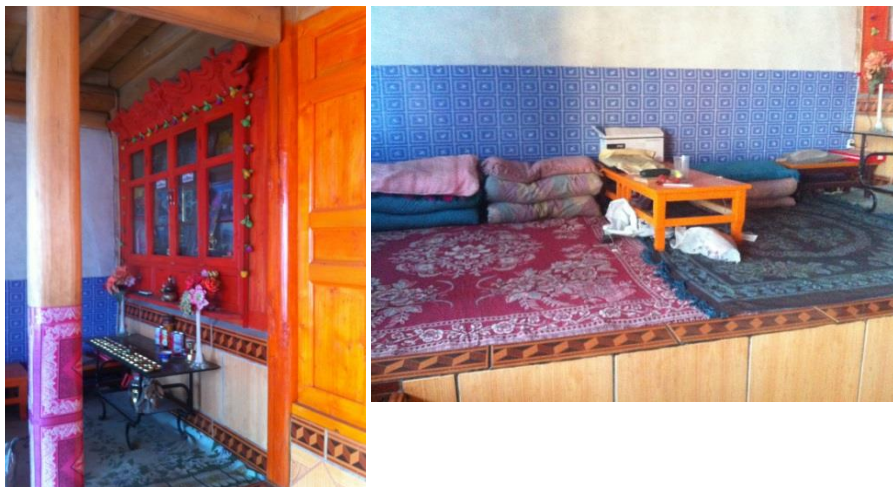


FIG 52. My winter home's glass enclosed porch.





FIG 53. Grandmother, Rdo rje skyid, and G.yang 'dzoms lha mo beat wool in their sheep enclosure to make the wool less matted.<sup>1</sup>



FIGS 54 and 55. (L) Milk bucket. (R) Hand mill in our home for grinding roasted barley grain into *rtsam pa*.



<sup>1</sup> The wool is beaten to remove dirt and sheep feces. The wool is first beaten where the ground is hard and then the wool is pulled apart by hand and shaken and beaten again. This is done several times. Finally, the wool is put on a big piece of sheepskin leather and beaten until it is very clean.

FIGS 56 and 57. (L) Grandmother's prayer wheel. (R) *Shugs mo* is a plant that grows near the river in the shared, fenced pasture. When harvested, the plant is broken off by hand. My family only uses it to make brooms.



FIGS 58 and 59. (L) A *dar lcog* 'prayer flags on a pole' stands to the right of the incense burning platform near my home. (R) Mother often suggests I go to Gser chen Lab rtse before I leave home (2014, Ban 'de rgyal).





FIGS 60 and 61. In 2017, I was very surprised see several thousand square meters of pastureland near Ma Ni thang covered with solar panels. About fifteen households had sold their pastureland to a company that planned to sell electricity to the government. A number of the local workers were Tibetan women (in yellow).



FIGS 62 and 63. The local main road was under construction in Ma Ni thang and all the local stores and neighbors were gone. Father pointed to some white tents and reported that some families had resettled there.



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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'gu tse འགྲུ་ཙེ།  
 'o 'khor འོ་ཁོར།  
 'o zo འོ་ཙོ།  
 'phang འཕང་།  
 'thag འཐག, 'thag khri འཐག་ཁྲི།  
 'ur cha འུར་ཇ།  
 ban de rgyal བན་དེ་རྒྱལ།  
 bar chad lam sel བར་ཆད་ལམ་སེལ།  
 bde chen བདེ་ཆེན།  
 bde chen dgon pa བདེ་ཆེན་དགོན་པ།  
 be'u thig བེའུ་ཐིག  
 bkra shis rgya mtsho བརྒ་ཤིས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 bla ma བླ་མ།  
 blo brtan rdo rje བློ་བརྟན་རྡོ་རྗེ།  
 bsang khem བསང་ཁེམ།  
 bsang khri བསང་ཁྲི།  
 bsang khug བསང་ཁུག་།  
 bzang spyod smon lam བཟང་སྟྱོད་སྟོན་ལམ།  
 bzhi ba'i smyung gnas བཞི་བའི་སྟུང་གནས།  
 bzho ze'u བཞོ་ཟེའུ།  
 cha ri ཇ་རི།  
 chas ཇས།  
 chos sgam ཇོས་སྒྲམ།  
 chur ba ཇུར་བ།  
 chur khu ཇུར་ཁུ།  
 chur sgye ཇུར་སྟེ།  
 da ra ད་ར།  
 dar lcog དར་ལྷོག་།  
 dga' ldan bshd sgrub dar rgyas gling དག་འ་ལྷན་བཤད་སྦྱབ་དར་རྒྱས་གླིང་།  
 dge 'dun shes rab དགེ་འདུན་ཤེས་རབ།  
 dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།  
 dgon bdag དགོན་བདག་།  
 dgun sa དགུན་ས།  
 dibao 低保  
 dkon mckog rgyal དགོན་མཚོག་རྒྱལ།

dpal ldan དཔལ་ལྷན།

dpal ldan bkra shis དཔལ་ལྷན་བརྟ་ཤེས།

dri bza' འི་བཟལ།

dung phor འུང་ཕོར།

g.yang 'dzoms lha mo གཡང་འཛོམས་ལྷ་མོ།

g.yon ru གཡོན་རུ།

Gajiaer 尕加二

gajiayi 尕加一

Gangmao 刚毛

gangs ljongs shes rig nor bu'i gling གངས་ལྷོངས་ཤེས་རིག་ནོར་བུའི་གླིང་།

gcan tsha གཅན་ཅ།

gcan tsha rdzong གཅན་ཅ་རྫོང་།

gcan tsha thang གཅན་ཅ་ཐང་།

gcod pa don 'grub གཅོད་པ་དོན་འགྲུབ།

gdang གདང་།

gle gzhug གླེ་གཞུག

gnam shad གནམ་ཤད།

go kha གོ་ཁ།

go khung གོ་ཁུང་།

go re གོ་རེ།

go re gcus ru ma གོ་རེ་གཅུས་རུ་མ།

gru gu གུ་གུ།

gser 'od གསེར་འོད།

gser chen གསེར་ཆེན།

gser mtsho skyid གསེར་མཚོ་སྐྱིད།

gshong mo che གཤུང་མོ་ཆེ།

gur mgon skyabs གུར་མགོན་སྐྱབས།

gzungs bsdus གཟུངས་བསྐྱུས།

Han 汉

hu tse ཁུ་ཙེ།

Huangnan 黄南

ja kha ཇ་ཁ།

ja lhag ཇ་ལག

Jianzha 尖扎

Jianzhatan 尖扎滩

jo bo rin po che ཇོ་བོ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

jo khang ཇོ་ཁང་།

ka mo ཀ་མོ།  
 ka rgya dang bo ཀ་རྒྱ་དང་བོ།  
 ka rgya gnyis pa ཀ་རྒྱ་གཉིས་པ།  
 kheb ཁེབ།  
 khem ཁེམ།  
 kho shog ཁོ་ཤོག།  
 khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།  
 klu mo tshe ring ལུ་མོ་ཚེ་རིང་།  
 lab rtse ལའ་རཙེ།  
 lag skor ལག་སྐོར། (mchig མཆིག)  
 lci ba ལྷི་བ།  
 lci sgam ལྷི་སྐམ།  
 ldar ལྟར།  
 lha sa ལྷ་ས།  
 lho ba ལྷོ་བ།  
 lo ba ལོ་བ།  
 lo sar ལོ་སར།  
 ltung bshags ལུང་བཤགས།  
 lug lhas ལུག་ལྷ་ས།  
 Luowa ལཱ་ལྱ།  
 ma Ni མ་ཏི།  
 ma Ni thang མ་ཏི་ཐང།  
 mar མར།  
 mar khu thang མར་ཁུ་ཐང།  
 mchod khri མཚོད་ཁྲི།  
 mchod me མཚོད་མེ།  
 mchod pa མཚོད་པ།  
 me lcags མེ་ལྷགས།  
 mgo log མགོ་ལོག།  
 mkhyen rab rgya mtsho མཁྱེན་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 mtsher sa མཚོར་ས།  
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྟོན།  
 ngang rong lnga ba 'jam dbyangs mkhyen rab rgya mtsho ངང་རོང་ལྷ་བ་  
                     འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཁྱེན་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 nor lhas རྟོར་ལྷ་ས།  
 nu kheb རུ་ཁེབ།  
 nub phyogs su skyod pa'i sgrug རུ་བུ་གས་སུ་སྟོད་པའི་སྐྱུང།

o rgyan 'phrin las rdo rje ཨོ་རྒྱལ་འཕྲིན་ལས་རོ་རྩེ།

o'u rong ཨོ་ལུ་རོང་།

ong ba ཨོང་བ།

pa lo skyid པ་ལོ་སྐལ་ལྷོ།

pags shad པགས་ཤ།

paṇ chen rin po che པན་ཆེན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

phying pa ཕྱིང་པ།

Qinghai 青海

ras gur རས་གུར།

rdo rje skyid རོ་རྩེ་སྐལ་ལྷོ།

rdo rje thar རོ་རྩེ་ཐར།

ril ma རིལ་མ།

rin chen rgyal རིན་ཆེན་རྒྱལ།

rje rin po che རྩེ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

rkang mo རྒང་མོ།

rma lho རྩ་ལྷོ།

rtsa lo རྩ་ལོ།

rtsag pa རྩག་པ།

rtsam pa རྩམ་པ།

rtswa khung རྩ་ཁུང་།

ru skor རུ་སྐོར།

rung ja རུང་ཇ།

rwa rgya རུ་རྒྱ།

sa dkar ས་དཀར།

Sangjiezhaxi 桑杰扎西

sangs rgyas bkar shis སངས་རྒྱལ་བཀར་ཤིས།

sangs rgyas chos lugs སངས་རྒྱལ་ཆོས་ལུགས།

sdud ma སུད་མ། (rtswa phyags རྩ་ཕྱགས།; phyags ma ཕྱགས་མ།)

sga སྐ།

sgar chag སྐར་ཆག

sgrol ma སྐྱོལ་མ།

sgye སྐལ་ལྷོ།

sgyo སྐལ་ལྷོ།

sha 'thag ས་འཐག

sha skam ས་སྐམ།

Shaanxi 陕西

Shinaihai 石乃亥

shugs mo ལྷུག་མོ།  
skal bzang rdo rje ལྷལ་བཟང་རྡོ་རྗེ།

ske thig སྐེ་ཐིག་།  
skyabs 'gro སྐུ་བས་འགྲོ།

sle bo སྤེ་བོ།  
smon lam སྐོན་ལམ།  
snying lcags rgyal སྟིང་ལྷགས་རྒྱལ།

spen ma སྤེན་མ།  
sprel nag སྤྲེལ་ནག།  
spyang tshang སྤྱང་ཚང།

ston sa སྟོན་ས།  
Sun Wukong 孙悟空

Tang San, Tangseng bla ma 唐僧 藍་མ།

thab ka ཐབ་ཀ།  
thab khung ཐབ་ཁུང།

thang ka ཐང་ཀ།  
thor thug ཐོར་ཐུག།

ting 'phags bskal gsum ཐིང་འཕགས་བསྐལ་གསུམ།  
tsha gsur ཐཤ་གསུར།

tsho ba ཐོ་བ།

Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an waiguoyu daxue 西安外  
国语大学

Xi'an 西安

Xiayangzhi 辖羊直

Xinjiang 新疆

Xiyouji 西游记

ya ru ཡ་རུ།

zho ཞོ།

zhwa dmar paN+Ti ta dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho ཞྭ་དམར་པ་ནི་ཏ་དགེ་  
འདུན་བསྐྱེད་འཛིན་རྒྱལ་མོ།

zi ling ཟི་ལིང།



# PERSPECTIVES

## TWO DOGS AND TWO YAKS

Pad+ma rig 'dzin པད་མ་རིག་འཛིན།

### ABSTRACT

Pad+ma rig 'dzin (b. 1990) in Yo lag (Zhiyue) Village, Mdo ba (Duowa) Township, Reb gong (Tongren) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China provides two accounts of dogs and two accounts of yaks. These accounts are from local community members - Lcags thar skyid (b. 1970), (Chos go, b. 1963), and Sgrol le (b. 1950).

### KEYWORDS

Amdo, beloved Tibetan animals, dogs, Mtsho sngon, Qinghai, yaks

## INTRODUCTION

I was born (1990) in Yo lag (Zhiyue) Village, Mdo ba (Duowa) Township, Reb gong (Tongren) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I give two accounts of dogs, and two accounts of yaks. The dog accounts are from my memory. The first yak account was told to me by Lcags thar skyid (b. 1970), who is my father's (Chos go, b. 1963) younger sister. She told me about this yak in late 2016 in her home in her winter pasture in Yo lag Village. She likes to talk with animals. In 2017, she had a ten-year-old female cat, and an old dog. In 2016, she raised a small lamb that followed her everywhere. It was interesting to observe the old dog, cat, and lamb, following her when she drove livestock. She said, "My old dog understands if I tell him to stand or lie down."

She has a good memory and is a gifted storyteller. When I was a child, I often listened to her stories.

The last account is also about a yak. It is from my mother's (Kun thar kyid, 1956-1997) second oldest sister, Sgrol le (b. 1950), in early 2017, in Mdo ba Township Town in her home. She had bad memories of schooling. In about 1956, she was sent to the primary school where she suffered from starvation. She recalled:

I was short and weak. We stood in lines for food at school. Students who were taller, and stronger, than me raised their *gangzi* 'metal cup' over my head to get food. There was not enough food for all the students, and I often did not get any food at all. One day, I cried and asked one of my community members, who was on a *skyel 'dren*<sup>1</sup> to take me back home. He agreed, and thus I was finally able to escape from school, and return home. Later, Mother told me that the hair on my back was covered with lice, and I could not speak. After having enough to eat for several days, I became more active and began to smile. I had nearly starved to death at school.

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<sup>1</sup> A Tibetan term for transporting food. In the past during harvest season, our local community members went to farming areas with male pack-yaks to procure flour and *rtsam pa* for the next year.

She remembered the Tibetan alphabet that she had learned in primary school, and taught it to her youngest son, and a grandson, before they went to school.

## OUR WATCHDOG

We also owned a vicious dog that Mother was very fond of. In our summer pasture, our neighbor had a daughter who attracted night visitors to her small tent. When this happened, our watch dog jerked on his chain with all his strength. One night, he broke his chain, and ran after a night visitor. Sadly, the visitor used his *mgo skor* 'dog beater' to kill our dog. It was a moonlit night. I didn't notice, but Mother got up and chased after the night visitor.

When she returned home, she said that someone had killed our dog, made several butter lamps, lit them on our altar, and chanted. Later, Mother and neighbor women said it was a pity that we had lost that dog, because, he was a good dog. Mother said, "I feel as bad as though I had lost several yaks. What a bad guy that killed my good dog."

At that time, I didn't understand why Mother said that the dog was more important than several yaks.

## KHYI RGAN ZE LE: AN OLD DOG

When I was a child, we had a very old dog, with soft matted brown hair, named Khyi rgan ze le 'Messy-hair Dog'. One of my uncles often kidded "Hey, little brother, what happened to your face? Did Khyi rgan ze le step on your face last night?"

They gave me the nickname "Ngo khyi rje 'Face as Ugly as a Dog's Footprint'. Later when they asked me "What happened to your face?" I answered, "Khyi rgan ze le stepped on my face," without hesitation.

They all burst into laughter when they heard my stupid answer, but I didn't feel self-conscious.

I didn't know how old the dog was, but it was too old to walk

steadily. He was also very dirty and peed on everything he saw. My maternal grandmother, Sgro pa (1923-2010), was very fond of him. They had a long, shared history. We were herders and moved according to the seasons. At that time, we had winter, summer, and autumn pastures. We used yaks and horses to transport our belongings.

During a long move to our summer pasture, Grandmother rode Rta rgan rkyang zhar<sup>1</sup> and called "Khyi rgan, Khyi rgan..." rhythmically. If we lost Khyi rgan ze le, Grandmother asked Father to find him. Later, Grandmother told us to put Khyi rgan ze le in a basket on the back of a yak when we moved to new pastures.

One day, while Father put him into a basket and was lifting it onto a yak's back, Khyi rgan ze le peed on the front of Father's robe. Father then angrily threw Khyi rgan ze le on the ground.

Grandmother gently responded, "If you hate me, you should beat me. Why beat my dog that way?"

Every time we treated the old dog badly, she was very unhappy and said this in a gentle way. This is what I remember about Grandmother's old dog.

#### 'BRI NAS RDO MA: A FEMALE YAK

We had only two female yaks when my father took us from Sgro rong bo<sup>2</sup> to Yo lag Village, and we didn't benefit much from them. The yaks delivered some calves that '*go ma bltas pa* 'died without clear reasons'. We exchanged one yak for a big black female yak from one of my relatives, Rdo rje mtsho. We called this yak Nas rdo ma 'like a piece of barley'. She had no horns, and her fat body resembled a big grain of barley.

She was a very good, kind yak. I liked to sit under Nas rdo ma and imitate women who were milking other yaks. Sometimes, she felt bored, and pushed me slightly with her hind leg, which didn't hurt me. Then she would walk away. The women who milked Nas rdo ma said,

<sup>1</sup> We called this very gentle, one-eyed horse "Rkyang zhar" 'red-brown blind'.

<sup>2</sup> A village located to the southwest of Mdo ba Township Town.

"What a good yak she is! Her udder has so much milk that it fills a big basin." They liked milking her. Her calves were also like her - good udders and they reproduced quickly.

When I was nine years old, Father took my second brother and me on pilgrimage to Lha sa on behalf of my dead mother, who died at a young age. We spent several days walking from Mdo pa to Reb gong. Fortunately, a truck loaded with coal let us ride in the back to Zi ling.

One night in Gor mo, my brother and I accidentally ran in front of some army trucks. Brother ran away quickly, but I couldn't move quickly. A truck nearly hit me. Fortunately, I was not injured. The soldiers in the back of the truck chanted "Mao zhuxi, Mao zhuxi... Chairman Mao, Chairman Mao..." it still sounds in my ears. Maybe they thought I had been mashed under the truck wheels.

There were many soldiers in Lha sa. It was about 1978, so few monasteries were open to pilgrims. Dga ldan Monastery was in ruins. There were no deity images or monks. There was only a small room and an old man who cleaned it. In Lha sa, we found a bell in a ruined monastery building. We returned home with that bell.

One of Nas rdo ma's calves had grown up by the time we got back home. We tied that bell around her neck and called her 'Khrol rdo ma, because we called the bell '*khrol ril*'. When I was about sixteen, I could milk as well as older women. I guess fifteen of my yaks were descended from Nas rdo ma. Later, she was gored to death by another yak. Her meat was delicious. We chanted *ma Ni* as we ate the meat.

During the time the local monastery was rebuilt, Father sold a bull that was one of Nas rdo ma's calves. He sold it for 300 RMB, and then sponsored a big prayer wheel at the monastery to commemorate Nas rdo ma and to accumulate merit. When that bull was small, he was so strong that I could not pull him away while he was nursing. Instead, he pulled me here and there. Tending the calves was a hard job for a weak child.

I still have Nas rdo ma's offspring. Four years ago, I sold half of my yaks. Nag rgyod ma, who was related to Nas rdo ma, reproduced a lot. She became pregnant each year and we have about eight yaks related to her. I am deeply grateful that Nas rdo ma is the most beneficial yak we ever had.

## AN OLD FEMALE YAK LIKE A HORSE

I liked all our livestock. Ten years ago, we sold all our yaks, sheep, and horses and moved to the township town. My black female yak without horns was the most generous, memorable yak we ever had. I chant *ma Ni* every-time I think about her. At that time, my husband's parents gave us a new home with a few yaks, but we didn't have enough yak-milk to raise my daughter. Then, one of my relatives gave us a black female yak that gave a lot of milk. After my daughter grew up, she called that yak 'Bri rgan rta rgan 'old female yak resembling a big horse', because she was very big.

My black female yak gave birth about fifteen times. Later, when she was in her twenties, she fell from the top of a cliff one day. Usually, in spring, animals are too thin to provide much meat, but my black female yak was very fat, and provided us with good meat. That yak truly benefited us. Her milk nourished my daughter. She helped us by giving us many yaks. And she even provided us good meat after her death. It was very hard to acquire good meat in the spring when she died. This is why I sincerely chant *ma Ni* whenever I think of her.

My husband likes horses, but just as I had built a relationship with his horses, he sold them. Later, I did not become attached to his horses. Nowadays, he still spends a lot on horses for races. I remember a big black horse that was very good to us. We used him to carry things when we moved in winter and to the summer pasture. We also rode him while herding. During horse races, he often won. We loved him and dedicated him to the local deities. He died when he was very old.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'bri nas rdo ma འབྲི་ནས་རྡོ་མ།  
 'bri rgan rta rgan འབྲི་རྒན་རྩ་རྒན།  
 'go ma bltas pa འགོ་མ་བལྟས་པ།  
 chos go ཚོས་གོ།  
 dga ldan དག་འཕྲན།  
 Duowa 多哇  
 Gangzi 缸子  
 Huangnan 黄南  
 khrol rdo ma ཁྲོལ་རྡོ་མ།  
 khrol ril ཁྲོལ་རིལ།  
 khyi rgan ཁྱི་རྒན།  
 khyi rgan ze le ཁྱི་རྒན་ཟེ་ལེ།  
 kun thar kyid ཀུན་ཐར་ཀྱིད།  
 lcags thar skyid ལུགས་ཐར་སྐྱིད།  
 lha sa ལྷ་ས།  
 ma Ni མ་ཉི།  
 Mao Zhuxi 毛主席  
 mdo ba མདོ་བ།  
 mgo skor མགོ་སྐོར།  
 mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།  
 nag rgyod ma ནག་རྒྱུད་མ།  
 nas rdo ma ནས་རྡོ་མ།  
 ngo khyi rje འོ་ཁྱི་རྗེ།  
 pad+ma rig 'dzin པདྨ་རིག་འཛིན།  
 Qinghai 青海  
 rdo rje mtsho རྡོ་རྗེ་མཚོ།  
 reb gong རེབ་གོང་།  
 rta rgan rkyang zhar རྩ་རྒན་རྒྱང་ཞར།  
 rtsam pa རུས་པ།  
 sgro pa སྒོ་པ།  
 sgro rong bo སྒོ་རོང་བོ།  
 sgrol le སྒོལ་ལེ།  
 skyel 'dren སྐྱེལ་འདྲེན།  
 Tongren 同仁  
 yo lag ཡོ་ལག



Zhiyue 直跃

zi ling 姿伶

MY BLACK HORSE AND A SACRED *MDZO*

Phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཕུན་ཚོགས་དབང་རྒྱལ།

ABSTRACT

Phun tshogs dbang rgyal (b. 1993) from Ska chung (Gaqun) Community, Nyin mtha' (Ningmute) Township, Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, China gives an account of his horse and his family's sacred *mdzo*.

KEYWORDS

beloved Tibetan livestock, Henan Mongolian County, Qinghai, sacred *mdzo*

## INTRODUCTION

I (b. 1993) am from Ska chung (Gaqun) Community, Nyin mtha' (Ningmute) Township, Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China. I give an account of my black horse and my family's sacred *mdzo*.

## MY BLACK HORSE

When I was a child, I was very excited to ride horses. Unfortunately, my family's horses were not gentle enough for a child to ride. Father then promised to buy a gentle horse for me. One day, when I returned home from primary school for the winter holiday, the weather was very cold. It was windy and heavy snow covered the grassland, making it very hard for the livestock to eat grass under the snow. Fortunately, on the upper parts of the mountains, the strong wind had blown away the snow and it was a bit easier for livestock to graze there. Father and I herded our sheep and yaks there everyday.

One afternoon, when it was nearly dusk, two men drove a herd of yaks out of a nearby valley. One of the men didn't ride. Instead, he held the horse's reins. The horse was exhausted and unable to walk very well. Father and I approached them and asked where they were from and where were they going. I supposed they were bandits, but Father was sure they were neither thieves nor bandits. He thought they were businessmen and allowed them to spend a night in our home.

The next morning when they were ready to leave, they wanted to sell my Father the tired horse cheaply. Father then bought that horse and mother made a cover for it, which kept it warm that winter. She also fed it wheat and rice soup every day.

Summer came. My weak horse was now stronger with black shiny hair. It ran swiftly on the grassland. Father drove it home and wanted to ride it, but it was very wild and hard to catch. Father was angry and disappointed, but it didn't try to escape from me. This amazed Father. At that time, a good horse was very important for a family, because there were no good roads from the county town to my

home place. Locals had to ride horses and drive pack yaks to the county town to buy necessities for their family and transport them home.

Father loved riding my black horse to the county town, because it ran quickly and didn't tire easily.

When there was a horse race in the local community, my black horse won every time. Sometimes when I was lonely, I talked to my horse like a close friend. He was very loyal and never told others what I said.

One autumn day, Father planned to go to the county town to sell butter and cheese. He then packed what he wanted to sell on three pack yaks. My brother-in-law accompanied Father to the county town.

In the early morning, Brother-in-law returned home after escorting Father to the county town. I waited patiently at home for Brother-in-law's arrival. When he returned in the afternoon, I didn't see my black horse and anxiously asked, "Where is my black horse?"

"One of our pack yaks gored it in the chest when I drove them behind the mountain. He can barely walk now," Brother-in-law replied nervously.

I immediately mounted a horse and raced to find my black horse. I climbed over a huge mountain and found him. He looked at me, and gave a weak neigh, and tried with all with his might to walk to me. I didn't know what to do. The yak horn had pierced his heart. Blood flowed constantly. Wanting to stop the bleeding, I took off my sweater and tried to staunch the bleeding. It didn't work and I slowly walked back toward home, my horse slowly trudging behind me as blood continued to ooze out of his chest. When I reached our pasture, he fell and couldn't get back up. I sat by him and chanted the Six Sacred Syllables until he stopped breathing. I returned home and went to bed without eating supper.

## A SACRED *MDZO*

My family had a hundred yaks and three horses. All the horses were males. Father sold all our sheep because he said my family's summer pastures and winter pastures were unsuitable for sheep. The summer pasture was too wet, which gave the sheep a hoof disease.

My family also had a *mdzo*.<sup>1</sup>

One morning as Father was burning incense, I brought the *mdzo* near the altar. Father then tossed milk on the *mdzo* from its back to its head, dabbed butter on its horns, and put a strip of five-colored silk in its ear. "From today, you are consecrated to the local mountain deity. No one will sell you or slaughter you for meat. We will let you live safely and naturally until you die."

Father talked to the *mdzo* as though it was a person.

I led the *mdzo*, circumambulating the altar, and then I released the *mdzo* into the herd. Father remained at the altar, chanting incense offering scriptures. Meanwhile, Elder Sister was milking in the yak enclosure and Mother was preparing breakfast in our yak hair tent.

Several days later. Father put a wooden pack frame on the *mdzo* and began to train it to pack. "First, we'll let it get used to the pack frame and then it will carry a loaded pack," Father said.

We tied the *mdzo*'s feet together with a rope, placed the pack frame on it, and then used ropes to secure the pack to the *mdzo*'s body to keep the frame from sliding sideways or backward.

The next morning, sister Bde skyid shouted loudly in the *nor khar* 'place where yaks are kept'. When Father and I went there, we found two dead yaks. There was no sign of disease, but our yaks continued to die. Father consulted a *bla ma* who said, "You did something to anger your local mountain deity."

"I can't remember doing any such things," Father replied.

The *bla ma* said, "Do you have a sacred yak or sheep? Did you do something with them?"

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<sup>1</sup> A hybrid between either a male yak and female cow, or a male bull and a female yak.

Father then said, "Oh my Buddha! We do have a sacred *mdzo* and several days ago, I began to train it to pack our belongings. Maybe that upset the mountain deity."

The *bla ma* took his prayer beads from around his neck, held them, closed his eyes, and divined three times, "You put a pack frame on the *mdzo* and trained it. That angered the mountain deity, so misfortune befell your herd," the *bla ma* said.

"What should I do now my holy *bla ma*?" Father said.

"Burn incense and pray to the mountain deity for mercy. Since you have already trained it to pack, you must keep the pack frame and nose-rope clean. Don't pack polluted things such as blankets and shoes on it."

Father hurried home and did as the *bla ma* had instructed.

Some days later, local household heads went to the county town, riding horses and driving pack yaks to buy and bring back supplies. It was 200 kilometers from my home place to Rma lho County Town. It took a long time to make a return journey. Father and some of our relatives went together. During the journey, they drove the pack yaks during the day and stayed on the grassland, made a fire, and cooked for themselves at night. Sometimes they asked families they met to spend a night in their home.

One day when they were returning home, my family's sacred *mdzo* suddenly ran and jumped crazily, shaking off all the things on its back. Father thought about the night before, which they had spent with a family. They had taken off the pack frames in a small building and the next morning, they put the packs back on the yaks. Father remembered he had seen a woman's sheep-skin robe atop the sacred *mdzo's* pack. That night, Father made libations to the local mountain deity. The next morning, they got up before dawn and got ready to leave. Father carefully packed the sacred *mdzo* and it behaved normally. They returned home safely.

Some days later my brother was herding our yaks. When he brought the yaks home in the afternoon, he beat the sacred *mdzo* with an old shoe. The next day our neighbor's dog attacked him. He used his dog beater to fend off the dog. Unfortunately, the dog beater rope was too long, he lost control, and the beater stuck his forehead. When he got home, he said, "I will never again beat our sacred *mdzo*."

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Gaqun 尕群

Henan 河南

Huangnan 黄南

mdzo མཛོ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོ་ན།

Ningmute 宁木特

nor khar རྩ་ཁར།

nyin mtha' ཉིན་མཐའ།

phun tshogs dbang rgyal ཕུན་ཚོགས་དབང་རྒྱལ།

Qinghai 青海

rma lho ར་ལྟོ།

ska chung bde skyid ས་ཅུང་བདེ་སྦྱིད།

# PROFILES



*Please introduce yourself.*

I am Klu rgyal from Ya rdzi (Xunhua) Salar (Sala, Za lar) Autonomous County of Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. I was born in rural /Dmag dpon (Muhong) Village and grew up with two brothers and a sister under my parents' good care. I completed school in the rural villages of my home place before entering Mtsho sngon Nationalities University, where I graduated with a BA in Tibetan Language and Literature in 2000.

From 2002 to 2004, I studied English in the English-Tibetan Program of Mtsho sngon Normal University, where I also gained skills in implementing community development projects. With support, I was able to do different grassroots community projects from 2002 to 2013. Thanks to these work experiences, I had the opportunity to do a MA in Rural and Regional Development in Thailand.

In 2009, I participated in the US Embassy's International Visitor Leadership Program,<sup>2</sup> and also attended a Georgetown Leadership Seminar, an annual gathering of selected rising leaders from around the world for a week of intensive discussion on major international issues. In 2010, I was selected by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for a three-week program in Education for Sustainable Development in Formal Education in Sweden.

More recently, I have concentrated on being a Tibetan restaurant entrepreneur. My aim is to create development opportunities for Tibetans by promoting the Tibetan restaurant business and developing its market. I am currently leading the Mtsho sngon Provincial Tibetan Restaurant Association, which formed in 2016. Currently it has forty-eight Tibetan restaurant members who are from Mtsho sngon and Gansu provinces. The mission of the

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2018. Restaurateur: Klu rgyal. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:164-187.

<sup>2</sup> This program provides opportunity to experience American political, economic, social, and cultural life, bringing up to 5,000 professional emerging leaders from around the globe to the USA each year for programs lasting up to three weeks.

association is to promote Tibetan food culture and develop the Tibetan food market.

*Describe the beginnings of your restaurant endeavors and what your experience has been.*

I started my restaurant business in 2012, while dealing with challenges in continuing my NGO work. I considered opening a teahouse. I enjoy spending leisure time in teahouses where friends can easily meet and discuss work while hanging out. These were my initial motivations. However, when I looked at this more closely, I realized that I lacked funds so I went looking for a co-investor. I convinced a friend to join me and we then opened our restaurant. We have been very lucky. Business has been very good since the second week of opening.

A key reason for this success is the excellent location of the restaurant on Nanshan 'South Mountain' Road here in Zi ling (Xining) centered in a Tibetan community. Our standards for sanitation and food security have been consistently higher than other Tibetan restaurants in Zi ling.

Following this success, we opened another restaurant in Zi ling and one in Chab cha (Qiabuqia) Town in Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. However, these were not as successful as the first one.

In managing these restaurants for six years, I have learned how important location is to success. A Tibetan restaurant should be located where it is easily accessible and visible to potential Tibetan customers. Secondly, the quality and taste of the food is the soul of a restaurant so it is very important to pay attention to the food on a daily basis to ensure that the chefs are making really tasty food for the customers. Service and cleanliness are equally important. Many Tibetan restaurants have failed because of substandard service and poor sanitation.

*What is the Tibetan food market?*

The Tibetan food market is changing in terms of the number of restaurants, food variety, and management standards. It is still far behind the Muslim and Chinese food markets. The restaurant business is seen as easier than many other types of businesses, so Tibetans prefer to do this. Nevertheless, because there is a lack of high level management skills, creativity, and attractiveness regarding the dishes, service and whole environment, consequently, it is hard for them to survive. Tibetan restaurants have not yet settled into a standard business model and tend to be temporary and somewhat disorganized. Typically, non-Tibetan customers see Tibetan restaurants as having poor sanitation, oily food, high prices, and limited food variety. Most Tibetan restaurant customers are Tibetans, which means the Tibetan food market is very small.

*What have you done in response to these challenges?*

I initially proposed the formation of a Tibetan restaurant alliance in Ziling focused on promoting the Tibetan food market, collective purchases of food materials to reduce costs, and an exchange of learning experiences to improve the capability of the restaurant owners. We wanted the alliance to stand out from other Tibetan restaurants, and eventually improve the Tibetan restaurant market as a whole. Following discussions at our first meeting, we agreed to set up a provincial level association - Mtsho sngon Provincial Tibetan Restaurant Association - to assist Tibetan restaurants. The participants also agreed to adopt my proposal on the development of the Tibetan food market. Later, fifty restaurants joined the association and in August 2016 we conducted the first Tibetan Restaurant Week. For three days all the member restaurants reduced their prices. This event was advertised via local newspapers and magazines, as well as websites and TV for both Tibetan and non-Tibetan customers.

In November 2016, Tibetan restaurant owners and experienced entrepreneurs were invited to a workshop to find a way to develop the Tibetan restaurant business in the competitive market. In December, we conducted a Tibetan chef competition in conjunction with Mtsho sngon Tibetan TV Station. We also set up a WeChat group that has nearly 200 individuals who share information. Currently, with

project support, we are building a Tibetan food website similar to the Meituan website. Our goal is to introduce Tibetan food culture and knowledge, advertise the Tibetan food market, and sell food.

We conducted our second workshop on 4-5 September 2017, and invited four American professional managers to share their experiences at the international level. We had fifty-two participants. Finally, I have raised project funding to train Tibetan restaurant managers, chefs, and waiters. These activities are scheduled for mid-December 2017 to February 2018.

All these activities are focused on promoting the Tibetan food market, improving Tibetan restaurant management and capacity, and improving the self-awareness of restaurant owners and their capabilities to make the restaurants attractive to non-Tibetan customers. It is necessary to intervene in this way because many non-Tibetans know very little about Tibetan food, and therefore avoid Tibetan restaurants. Promoting the Tibetan food market in different ways may change their view of Tibetan food.

*What is the Tibetan restaurant scene like in Zi ling and in other parts of Mtsho sngon?*

There are more than thirty Tibetan restaurants in Zi ling. Some operate in homes - informal home-restaurants. Others are in other areas and operate with all the required legal documents. Most Tibetan restaurants have few workers and are poorly managed. While Tibetan restaurants may be decorated in a Tibetan style very nicely, they may also feature poor sanitation and oily food. As already mentioned, these conditions fail to attract non-Tibetan consumers.

*What are the biggest challenges for you as a restaurateur in Zi ling?*

The high cost of renting suitable facilities, the lack of professional chefs and waiters, and expanding the market by attracting non-Tibetan customers.

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*Who are your customers?*

Ninety percent of my restaurants' customers are Tibetans. It is more or less the same for most of the Tibetan restaurants in Xining.

*What are your customers' favorite foods?*

This differs for rural and city customers. Tibetan *mog mog* 'steamed dumplings', yak meat sausage, blood sausages, steamed dumplings, and various noodles are favorites for those from rural areas. *Phyur mog* 'cheese<sup>1</sup> momo'. *Dkar sha* 'boiled small dumplings',<sup>2</sup> and fried dishes are favorites for city people.

*Who are your cooks and how were they trained?*

My restaurants provide both Tibetan and Chinese foods so we have one Tibetan chef and one Chinese chef. At the time of hiring, the Chinese chef had some skills, but the Tibetan chef learned his skills in the restaurant.

*Who are the waiters in your restaurants? How were they trained?*

The waiters are Tibetans from rural villages. New waiters receive three days of training from an experienced waiter who explains and demonstrates what they need to know. Afterwards, the new waiters work independently, but can always ask for help from experienced waiters when necessary. Tibetans rarely treat restaurant work as a career, but rather as a side occupation so training them to be professional is challenging.

*Where and how do you obtain the food/vegetables/fruit for your restaurant?*

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<sup>1</sup> Cheese = *chur ba*.

<sup>2</sup> Diced meat and onions are placed in a bowl of water, covered with a piece of dough made from wheat flour, and steamed for about fifteen minutes. Afterwards, the steamed cover is broken into small pieces and placed in the bowl to absorb the flavor of the meat soup.

We have agreements with nearby vendors, who send food to meet our orders. Every month we check the bill and pay them.

*What advice do you have for someone thinking about starting a restaurant?*

First, your own interests and experiences in the restaurant business are very important. Your personal interest is the engine to start and continue your restaurant, and also to push you to learn quickly and persevere, otherwise, the hard, complex work of establishing a restaurant will frustrate you. Secondly, the choice of the restaurant location is very important. Your restaurant should be near or better, at the center of, your potential customer population. Once you open your restaurant, the quality of your service, and sanitation and food standards are critical to the success of your business. It is also important to be creative in terms of decoration, service, food, and advertising.

*Please give us the names, locations/addresses, and contact information for your restaurants.*

Amala (A ma'i g.yang khyim) 'Prosperous Family' Tibetan Restaurant is located on Nanshan East Road of Xining City, opposite the Qinghai Tibetan Medical Hospital. Our phone number is +8619718117935

*What else would you like to say about your life as a restaurateur?*

Not long after I opened my first restaurant, a fellow villager asked me why I opened a restaurant since I had graduated from an international college and had done NGO work with international partners. He said that I shouldn't waste my life in the restaurant business. At that time, I was also confused. However, my hesitation disappeared when my restaurant inspired other, more established Tibetan restaurants to make positive changes in terms of food variety, restaurant environment, and management. Although many Tibetans today do not perceive a career as a restaurateur as something very positive, I believe that if I can lead Tibetan restaurants in a better direction, it is as

worthwhile as doing community development because it provides economic opportunities to many people. However, restaurant management makes you very busy. You have less time to spend with family and friends. It is especially difficult to work with employees who have limited formal education and are from rural villages, as they are not used to working inside a box of rules.

*There is a lot of talk these days about being an entrepreneur. What advice do you have for Tibetans considering going into business?*

It is very important to find the value of doing one type of business, rather than thinking of making money only for oneself. This value that you identify needs to give you the passion to dedicate your life to this business. You will then not get involved in negatively comparing your work with others, and find joyful satisfaction in your efforts. It is also important to have a good knowledge of and rich experiences in the business that you will go into. This knowledge is worth more than the money you have to start your business. Thirdly, it is OK to dream about success, but it also critical to think about what you will do if your business fails. Fourth, if it is hard for you to start a business by yourself, you might consider finding a good partner who shares your values to work with.

*Please tell us about your cultural preservation work.*

Since 2008 I have done three cultural preservation projects focused on Tibetan folk culture, such as local rituals, festivals, and customs in both pastoral and farming communities. These projects created DVDs and books, which were distributed to local schools and communities for locals to re-discover their life and culture. The outcomes were also presented to scholars and universities as Tibetan culture research materials.

*Please tell us about your community development work.*

In 2002, with support from various people, I started community development work. I did my first project in my village, which is located

in a mountain area. It provided solar cookers for each village family to reduce women's fuel-collecting burden and environmental degradation. This project was very successful and highly appreciated by locals. This encouraged me to continue to work in community development. By 2013, I had implemented fifteen education projects including building schools, providing school equipment, training teachers, providing books and student necessities, arranging cultural education activities; livelihood and agricultural projects; and village literacy projects, with a total value of about two million RMB. These projects were funded by embassies in Beijing, and international foundations and individuals. These projects effectively addressed the urgent problems that schools and villages faced at that time. Seeing the great value to rural communities, I promised myself to continue this work for my whole life. Therefore, I established an NGO, Friend of Rural Community Development, to help rural villages. However, for complicated reasons this dream ended.

#### IMAGES

Amala Restaurant Menu and Tibetan Restaurant Association activities.





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一百

藏餐是时三大藏区菜点的统称。藏餐和中餐、西餐等不同，主要有两个方面：其一，它是以手、刀、勺为主要用餐工具，用餐方式：其二，它是用藏区原产动植物等为原料的菜肴和饮料。

早在几千年前，藏式经济的雏形就在青藏高原上产生和发展。那时，他们发现了自然火，继而又发现了取火之法。从此，由生食到熟食的生产，完成了烹饪的第一次飞跃。随着火的运用，陶器的发明，有的地区又以铜锡器的出现，经历了火烹、火煮、火煎、火蒸等各个历史阶段，藏族人民的烹饪技术得到了空前的发展和进步，进入了文明的烹饪时代。随后，藏族人民通过商贸往来与汉族的接触，开展了广泛的经济文化交流，继而进一步通过商贸大量丰富了藏式烹饪文化的内涵，使烹饪技术得到了进一步的飞跃和发展。这时人们开始注重饮食与营养，烹制用的原料品种增多，烹调方法日益丰富，饮食卫生观念也日益增强，“医食同源”、“药膳两用”等理论皆能充分说明当时的品质医药及饮食文化有了长足的发展。

西藏的烹饪饮食，在周边国家和地区广泛流行，对南亚地区的主要尼泊尔、不丹、锡金、印度、巴基斯坦等地区以及中国各大城市，藏族社会生产力的发展，新原料的不断丰富，新技法的不断提高，烹饪技术的广泛应用，烹制理论的不断丰富和发展，都为藏式烹饪的全面发展和进一步飞跃，“绿色饮食”（无公害食品）等科学方法新的萌芽，提供了基础，藏区这一“绿色饮食”文化，将得到全新的再生。

阿马啦正在为这一新的篇章尽自己的努力……



白条手抓 **68元/斤**  
Zhe Tian Shou Zhua 221014

阿卜包子 25元/例

干抓牛肉 68元/斤



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



土豆泥  
Potato Mashed  
¥28元/例



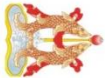
椒盐牛肉  
Fried Beef with Salt  
¥38元/例



藏家拼盘  
Tibetan Platter  
¥42元/例



勇士牦牛肉  
Warrior Beef  
¥68元/例



图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准

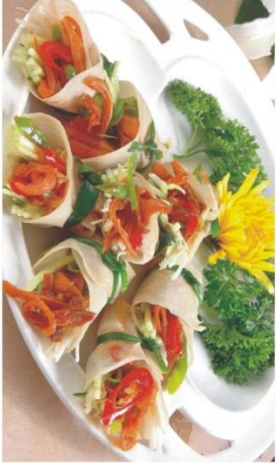


酥油青稞粒  
Butter Barley  
¥32元/例



特色藏餐  
Tibetan Cuisine  
¥68元/例

勇士牦牛肉  
Warrior Beef  
¥48元/例



风味拼盘  
Flavor Platter  
¥68元/例





鱼香肉丝  
Yu Xiang Rou Si  
24元/例



青笋肉片  
Qing Sun Rou Pian  
24元/例



珍珠丸子  
Zhen Zhu Wan Zi  
48元/例



大力回锅肉  
Da Li Hui Guo Rou  
36元/例

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



酸辣白菜  
Suan La Bai Cai  
22元/例



油菜菜  
You Cai Cai  
18元/例



娃娃菜  
Wa Wa Cai  
26元/例



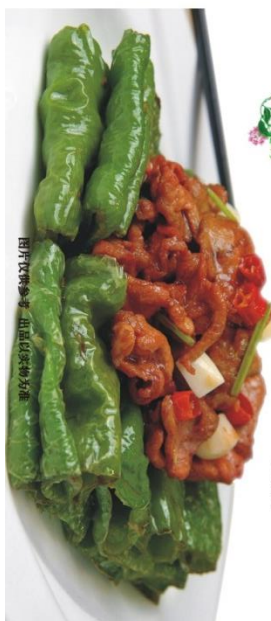
上海青  
Shang Hai Qing  
18元/例



西兰花  
Xi Lan Hua  
20元/例



土豆丝  
Tu Dou Si  
18元/例



虎皮辣子爆肥牛  
Hu Pi La Zi Bao Fei Niu  
36元/例

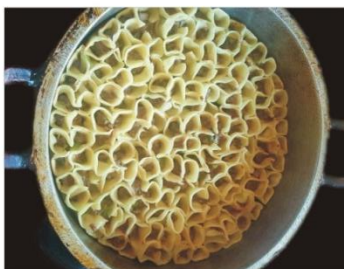


图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准





辣味牛肉  
La La Beef  
¥58 元/例



藏家鸡柳  
Zang's Chicken  
¥48 元/例



牦牛肉  
Yak Meat  
¥25 元/例



高羔肉  
Gao Gao Meat  
¥26 元/例

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



沙沙肉  
Sa Sa Meat  
¥48 元/例



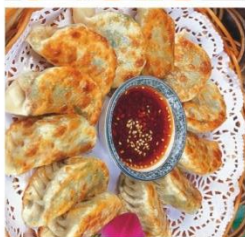
薄片牛肉丝  
Thin Beef  
¥52 元/例



藏家羊排  
Zang's Lamb  
¥68 元/例

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准







ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་  
生熟鸭片  
Sheng Shu Ya Pian  
¥48 元/例

精美凉菜



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་  
凉拌金针粉  
Bian Lai Jin Zhen Fen  
¥16 元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་  
凉拌萝卜  
Liang Shu Luo Bo  
¥12 元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་  
凉拌黄瓜  
Liang Shu Huang Gua  
¥12 元/例

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་  
凉拌木耳  
Liang Shu Mu Er  
¥22 元/例

精美凉菜



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་  
三色金针菇  
San Shi Jin Zhen Gu  
¥28 元/例



ལྷ་མོ་ལྷ་མོ་  
小葱拌羊腿  
Xiao Cong Ban Yang Tui  
¥48 元/例

图片仅供参考 出品以实物为准





**滋補湯羹**  
Zhi Bu Tang  
2018-01-01

鮮菇湯  
Xian Gu Tang  
38元/例



時珍三鮮湯  
Shi Zhen San Xue Tang  
22元/例



紫葉蛋花湯  
Zi Ye Hua Tang  
18元/例



西紅柿蛋湯  
Xi Hong Zhu Tang  
18元/例



西湖牛肉羹  
Xi Xue Ni Rou Tang  
22元/例

圖片仅供参考 出品以实物为准



鮮牛肉羹  
Xue Ni Rou Tang  
18元/例



冬瓜非骨湯  
Dong Gua Fei Tang  
28元/例



國子萝卜排  
Guo Zi Mo Xia Tang  
52元/例



古潤堂  
Gu Ren Tang  
18元/碗  
36元/例

圖片仅供参考 出品以实物为准

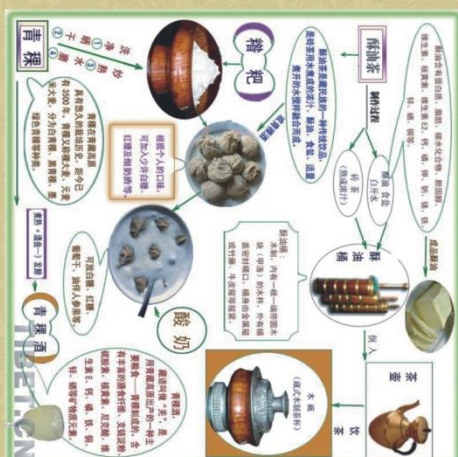




蛋炒饭  
Egg Fried Rice  
18元/例



土豆牛腩煲仔饭  
The Dotted Chicken Rice  
28 元/例



菜谱图片全供参考 出品以实物为准

Group photo of workshop participants in front of Amala Tibetan Restaurant, Zi ling City, 4 September 2017.







Tibetan chef competition in Zi ling, December 2016.



# 第一届藏餐文化美食节

## 活动时间：2016年8月12日至14日

## 活动地点：以下各餐厅

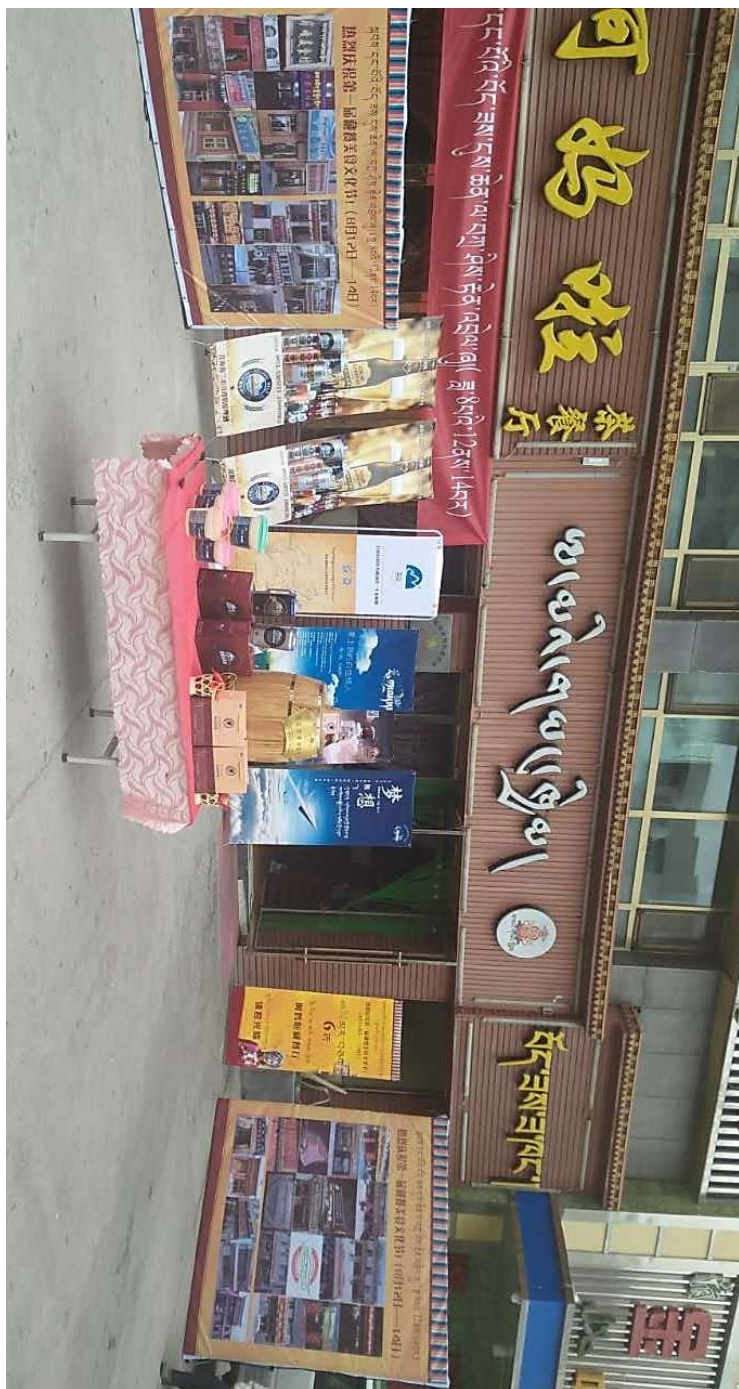
						
地点：西宁南山东路120号省藏医院正对面 电话：0971 8117935	地点：西宁大十字文庙街文庙广场（总店） 电话：0971-8211669	地点：西宁南山路第四人民医院对面 电话：0971-8210680	地点：西宁六一桥汽车站旁边 电话：15722345565	地点：西宁市开发区半岛步行街 电话：0971-7733980	地点：西宁市海湖新区西关大街西城名邸(海湖新城对面) 电话：13619700234	地点：西宁市东大街38号莫家街口凯达广场八层 电话：0971-8245577
						
地址：西宁市南山路201号省藏医院对面 电话：15609712022	地址：西宁市假日王朝酒店隔壁颐园小区1号楼四单元0101室 电话：0971-8290204	地点：西宁夏都大街夏都家园北院东面 电话：18709785067	地址：道中县塔尔寺对面金塔桥37号 电话：0971-2235281	地址：塔尔寺东拉市场36号 电话：15294111666	地址：塔尔寺金塔路216号 电话：15294111666	地址：塔尔寺金塔路216号 电话：13299882188
						
地点：黄南州同仁县年都平市场加油站对面 电话：0973-8723676	地点：同仁县热曲广场旁边 电话：0973-8795000	地点：黄南州同仁县铁吾小区（热曲公寓一楼） 电话：0973-5930555	地址：同仁县青海热曲夏都中路 电话：18609735266	地址：同仁县 电话：18935537676	地址：同仁县东山路汽车站斜对面 电话：13897033066	

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The opening ceremony for Tibetan Restaurant Week 2016 was held in front of Amala Tibetan Restaurant in Zi ling City.



## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a ma'i g.yang khyim ཨ་མའི་གཡང་ཁྱིམ།

Amala 阿玛拉

chab cha ཆབ་ཇ།

chur ba རྒྱུ་བ།

dkar sha དཀར་ཤ།

dmag dpon དམག་དཔོན།

Hainan 海南

klu rgyal ལུ་རྒྱལ།

Meituan 美团

mog mog མོག་མོག།

mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔོན།

Muhong 木洪

Nanshan 南山

phyur mog ཕུར་མོག།

Qiabuqia 恰卜恰

Qinghai 青海

Salar, Sala 撒拉

Xining 西宁

Xunhua 循化

ya rdzi ཡ་རྩི།

za lar ཟ་ལར།

zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།



FLOWER OF THE FOURTH MOON:  
MY MONGGHUL MOTHER - SAIHUA

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春, Joints Surgery Department,  
Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital)

ABSTRACT

Limusishiden interviewed his mother, Saihua (b. 1946), on 19 November 2017 at their home in Tughuan Village, Danma Town, Huzhu Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, PR China. He recorded her using an audio recorder, later listened to this material again, took notes in Mongghul, and then wrote this text in English.

Saihua's was given the name Siyuehua (fourth lunar month flower), but her name was soon shortened to Saihua because it was easier to pronounce. Saihua describes her parents' home in Yomajaa Village, Donggou Township, Huzhu County. In addition, she provides information about her paternal and maternal grandparents, how her life changed when she married and moved into her husband's home, and her experiences while journeying to her parents' home.

The part of the account that discusses menstruation came from Limusishiden's wife (Jugui, b. 1969) and her discussions with Saihua on 19 November 2017 at their home in Tughuan Village.

KEYWORDS

Himalaya women history, Mongghul oral history, Plateau life narratives, Qinghai Monguor autobiography

FIG 1. Saihua (Tughuan Village, Danma Town, Huzhu Mongghul Autonomous County, Qinghai Province, China, 19 February 2018, Zhinzan).



## FIG 2. People

Name	Dates	Relationship to Saihua
Siyuehua, Saihua	1946	self
Jugui	1969	daughter-in-law
Qishihua	1923-2003	mother
Rnqan	1918-1984	father
Limudiinjog	~1911~1953	father's brother
Qishiai	~1916~1989	father's brother
Limuqog	~1898~1961	father's sister
Granny (name unknown)	1873-1942	father's mother
Fuguihua	?	father's mother's daughter
Grandfather (name unknown)	~1880~1954	father's father
Ma Zhongbao	?	grandfather's maternal uncle's son
Juhuaaji	~1926~1988	uncle' wife
Quxjang	1925-1981	mother's brother
Buqang	1927 -?	mother's sister
Zhumashiji	1929-1996	mother's sister
Zhumazang	1932-?	mother's sister
Zhaxi	b. 1939	mother's brother
Puriji	1942 - 2016	sister
Limujaxi	~1944~1965	brother
Niiga	b. 1950	sister
Wanshuuhua	?	sister
Wujiji	?	sister
Qilunbog	b. 1958	brother
Limudanzhuu	b. 1966	son
Limusishiden	b. 1968	son
Qiyansuu	b. 1971	daughter
Niidosirang	b. 1974	son
Danjansirang	b. 1978	son

## MY PARENTS AND PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS

My name is Saihua. My parents lived in Yomajaa Village, Donggou Township. My mother was Qishihua (1923-2003). She and Father (Rnqan (1918-1984) were both from the same village. Father had two older brothers, one older sister, and one younger sister. He was the fourth of five children. These siblings included Limudiinjog (~1911~1953), Qishiai (~1916~1989), an older sister who married and moved into Rangdin Village, and a younger sister who married and moved into her husband's home in Chinja Village, Donggou Township. I don't know Father's sisters' names, when they were born, or how long they lived.

Father had another elder sister, Limuqog (~1898~1961), who married and moved into her husband's home in Lughuari Village, Taizi Township. I need to give you some background about her. Granny (Father's mother, 1873-1942), whose name I do not know, had been a wife in the Naringhuali<sup>1</sup> area before she was *buli* 'captured' by my grandfather. Her former husband was a soldier who died in a battle.

Granny returned to her parents' home after her husband died and lived there for about a year. A family from a Mongghul area then proposed that she marry their son. Granny's parents and she agreed.

In the past, divorced or widowed Mongghul women were escorted to their husbands' homes very late at night. At the agreed upon time, Granny was escorted to her husband's home by her family, relatives, and clan members. Meanwhile, my grandfather's side had learned about this and wanted to kidnap Granny to be his wife. In old Mongghul society, it was acceptable to kidnap divorced or widowed women as they were being escorted to their husband's home.

Grandfather's connections quickly called together about twenty strong men from Grandfather's home, his clan members, and some of his villagers. They then went to a ravine with clubs and prepared to ambush Granny's entourage. The site they chose was the only pathway Granny's group could have taken.

As the Granny's escorts were hurriedly passing through the ravine in the pitch-black night, the men from Grandfather's side

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<sup>1</sup> Today's Dongshan Township.

suddenly shouted, "*Buliya!* 'Capturing!'" and rushed Granny's escorts. Some were beaten. In a great rush and panic, they left Granny and fled.

Grandfather's side thus easily and successfully kidnapped Granny and took her to his home. This is how Granny became Grandfather's wife.

Granny had six children with her former husband. Granny left one of her daughters (Limuqog) in her parents' home in Hualian Valley, Donghe Township while the others remained in her former husband's home in the Naringhuali area.

When Limuqog was still a child, she was sent to Granny's maternal uncle's home in Hualian Village. Her maternal uncle had several children in his home and his family was too poor to feed Limuqog. One day, after bilateral negotiation, Limuqog's maternal uncle promised to give Limuqog to a wealthy man surnamed Ji in Lughuari Village, Taizi Township as *tuuyang*.<sup>1</sup> Limuqog was raised in the Ji Family and played with their children. Many years later, when she was grown up, she married one of the Ji Family sons, as had been previously arranged.

Granny and her daughter, Limuqog, lost touch with each other and were not reunited until many years later when someone told Granny that her daughter had been *tuuyang* in a family in Lughuari Village. Meanwhile, Limuqog had learned that her mother had been a 'captured' wife in Yomajaa Village.

Granny was excited to hear news of her daughter, borrowed a woolen gown, and went to Lughuari Village to visit her daughter. When they met, they embraced and cried emotionally. Later, Limuqog began visiting Granny's home in Yomajaa Village and recognized her mother's home as her 'parents' home. They began interacting as relatives.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tuuyang* refers to a girl who, as a baby, was sent or given to another family who could afford to raise her. Later, when she reached marriageable age, she became the wife of one of the family's sons. Historically, Mongghul used the term *huushinjii* for a divorced woman and *gafu* (*guafu*) for a widow. Before 1949, if a couple agreed to divorce, representatives from both sides invited a man literate in Chinese to come to an abandoned yard where they sat together and composed a divorce agreement. In the past, *huushinjii* and *gafu* were denigrated.

Granny gave birth to six children in Naringhuali and six in Yomajaa Village. I don't know exactly where she lived in the Naringhuali area before she was kidnapped by Grandfather's group. I heard that one of her children was born at the foot of a slope while she drove livestock loaded with bags of manure toward a field in her former husband's area. My own mother said one of her daughters came to visit Granny from Naringhuali wearing her *niudaari*.<sup>1</sup> Her name was Fuguihua.

Granny was kind-hearted. She did not mistreat her daughters - in-law and took good care of her grandchildren. My mother (Qishihua 1923-2003) said, "I didn't weep very much when my own mother died, but I wept very sadly during Granny's funeral."

Grandfather (~1880~1954) was a short man. I never knew his name and he had no brothers. He had an additional digit attached to one of his thumbs. One time, Grandfather asked me to pour water onto his hands so he could wash them. I noticed his six fingers and called him Liuziai Aadee 'Six Fingers Grandfather.' This made him angry. He immediately beat my waist with his walking stick. Except for this, I have no memory of him.

Grandfather was a tough nut. One time, Granny's younger brother came to visit her in Yomajaa Village, bringing a long woolen gown to her. When he reached Granny's front gate, he was not welcomed by Grandfather. Furthermore, Grandfather beat him for no clear reason. Granny's younger brother didn't enter her home. Instead, he went straight back to his own home. This broke the relationship between Granny in Yomajaa and her parents in Hualian Village.

My father's father's father had two or three brothers. One of them took his family to today's Yaozigou in Datong Hui and Mongghul

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<sup>1</sup> *Niudaari* refers to a headdress. In 1938, according to an unpublished government document, the ruling Ma Family government forced Mongghul women to stop wearing distinctive Mongghul clothing. Afterwards, *niudaari* gradually disappeared. The four types of *niudaari* were Tughuan, *boqi* (*boji*) 'winnowing tray', *njasi* 'plow', and *shqe* 'big' *niudaari*. The Tughuan *niudaari* was worn only by the women of the region under the jurisdiction of Tughuan Living Buddha and was made of paper and easily damaged by rain, which is why local Han passersby urged each other to hurry when they saw Mongghul women rushing back to their homes from the fields - a sign of imminent rain (Limusishiden and Stuart 2010:58).

(Tu) Autonomous County hoping to have a better life by cultivating more land. During the first several years, he and his family regularly came to visit his original home in Yomajaa Village. One time, he came on horseback during the time of a Qingming Festival<sup>1</sup> in Yomajaa Village. While returning to his home in Datong, he reached the Daitong Muruun 'Datong River'. At that time, there was a simple narrow wooden bridge over the surging river. Unfortunately, as he was leading his horse by its reins across the bridge, the horse fell down into the water and washed away. Since then, neither he nor his family visited their original home again.

Grandfather's maternal uncle's home was in Maja Raxi Village in today's Donghe Township. One of his maternal uncles' son's name was Ma Zhongbao. He was a well-known martial artist. Grandfather once sent his second son, Qishiai, to study martial arts from Ma Zhongbao.

Father's oldest brother - Limudiinjog was infamous. He often beat and scolded his younger brothers and their wives; his mother, Granny; and his own wife. One time during a conflict with his wife, Limudiinjog smashed furniture, windows, and a kitchen door in the home. The couple fought anytime and anywhere. Later, when Father and his older brother, Qishiai, were grown up, the two worked together and tackled Limudiinjog. Subsequently, he was no longer able to bully his family or his wife.

Limudiinjog's wife died in her forties while giving birth. The new baby daughter was born alive and cried energetically. Limudiinjog grabbed the infant's feet, walked to the foot of a slope, threw the baby daughter upside down in a hole, and buried her alive. On the way, the baby cried constantly. His wife was dead and he was getting old. His brothers and brothers' wives wouldn't help him raise the baby daughter because he was a very bad man and had a poor relationship with his family members.

Limudiinjog was an awful man. I have only a vague memory of him. Before he died, he suffered from a disease that made his abdomen swell until it burst. A lot of yellow liquid flowed out and made the felt

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<sup>1</sup> Qingming is a festival to commemorate dead ancestors observed on the first day of the fifth solar term of the Chinese lunar calendar.

pad on his bed become hard and sticky. His family members assisted in turning his body until he died several days later. People cursed him and thought his belly splitting open was retribution for the evil he had done in his life.

Uncle Qishiai's former wife was from Naja Village, Weiyuan Town. She had a daughter when she was thirty years old. She wanted to visit her parents' home after her daughter was born, but Uncle disagreed. The couple quarreled, and Aunt then fled to her parents' home. Ten days later when she returned to her husband's home, she learned that her baby had died.

My aunt died when she was forty years old. I don't know what caused her death. Before long, Uncle Qishiai married Juhujai (~1926~1988), a widow from his village. She brought a daughter by her former husband into the home. Her former husband was a soldier who had died in battle. This daughter grew up and moved into her husband's home in Limog Ama Village, Donggou Township.

#### MOTHER'S FAMILY

I have no memory of my mother's parents. Mother's father was a well-known tailor and singer of traditional Mongghul songs. He didn't sew in village homes as many tailors did. Instead, he was often invited to do sewing work in monasteries, for example, in Rgulang.<sup>1</sup>

Mother's parents had four daughters and two sons. Mother was the oldest child. Quxjang (1925-1981) was a farmer. Buqang (1927-?) married and moved into her blind husband's home in Jangama Village, Weiyuan Town. Buqang's husband killed himself by cutting his neck with a sickle after he was found guilty of stealing a pair of scissors from a local state-run tailor factory. He worried he would be seriously punished. That's why he killed himself. Zhumashiji (1929-1996), married and moved into her husband's home in Szanghuali Village,

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<sup>1</sup> Dgon lung byams pa gling (Youningsi), a Dge lugs monastery located in Sitan Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County, Qinghai Province. There were 197 monks in 1990 (Nian and Bai 1993:122-126), Pu (2013:71-75) reports 396 monks in 1957, and Smith (2013:291) reports over 300 monks.



Donggou Township and died from a heart disease. Zhumazang (1932-?) married and moved into her husband's home in Luxuu Village, Donggou Township, Huzhu County. In 1949, her husband took their family to the Dakuaishidan area of today's Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province to seek a better life.

Zhaxi (b. 1939) had problems with hearing after he was born. He was also naïve. At the age of twenty, his elder sister, Zhumazang, introduced him to a Tibetan woman in Zhucha Village, Zhucha Township, Tianzhu County. They married in 1960 at a time when the Tibetan woman lived alone, suffering from an infectious disease on her face. The marriage proved to be good for both of them since they could take care of each other.

## MY CHILDHOOD

My family was very poor when I was very young. We had only a single row of rooms on the east side of our home compound, and only one donkey. When I was a child, Mother told me that my family had a small black dog. One summer day, Mother and Aunt went to work in a mountain field located east of our village. They had to walk more than four kilometers along a rugged mountain path. Suddenly, ferocious black clouds rolled up low in the sky. Thunder boomed and lightning flashed. Mother and Aunt were ready to leave and head home when my family dog arrived in the field. Seeing Mother, the dog excitedly shook its head and tail, bit the edge of Mother's long gown and trousers, and then ran some distance away. Soon it returned and did the same thing again. Jumping up and down, the dog circled Mother while shaking its head and tail. Mother ignored it. The dog repeated this behavior until Mother finally realized that the dog's behavior was unusual. She then looked into the distance in the direction the dog seemed to be indicating and faintly made out something. Mother and Aunt then trotted toward this faint, black thing. The dog excitedly ran ahead of them, stopped, looked back to ensure Mother was following, and then ran ahead again.

Mother and my aunt found me there alone when they got there. I was wearing a long woolen gown without trousers and shoes, crying

and shivering in that cold, wild place. Mother immediately lifted me up, hugged me, and cleaned away my tears and snot. She then understood the dog's unusual behavior.

The dog was familiar with the field and I had followed it, looking for Mother. Finally, I was too tired to walk any further. That's when the dog rescued me by running to Mother. The dog had been to that field with Mother many times before, and that is why it was so familiar with the way to go there.

Mother was delighted that the dog had saved her daughter's life. Had it not been for the dog, my mother and aunt would have gone back home by a different path that would not have taken them near where I stood. I would have surely have died on that adventure without our smart family dog.

Henceforth, Mother and other family members were very good to that dog. However, a couple of years later, an old man surnamed Huang beat the dog to death. We then hated him. Mother often mentioned the dog's death when she was getting old. Mother said I was only about four or five years old at that time. I have no memory of this adventure.

Mother told me that when I was very young, I once went to my grandfather's home when he lived with his first son, Limudiinjog, and his family. One day, my grandfather was carrying one of his grandchildren on his back while walking in the compound yard with me following him. Suddenly, Limudiinjog's family dog attacked me and bit my chin. Blood flowed out immediately. Grandfather quickly took some incense sticks from a nearby room. He chewed them into a paste and smeared it on my wound. The blood stopped flowing immediately.

#### MOTHER'S CHILDREN

Mother gave birth to eleven children. Seven died, of whom two were sons. The remaining four were a son and three daughters. Mother's firstborn was a son who died when he was a baby. The second-born was a daughter, Puriji (1942-2016), who married and moved into her husband's home in Hara Bulog Village, Donggou Township. The third-

born died when she was still a baby. The fourth-born was Limujaxi (~1944~1965). He was not very clever. He was born in a field where Mother was weeding together with my aunt. His lack of cleverness was said to have been caused by sunlight, since he was born under the sun during the day.

I am the fifth-born child. The sixth and seventh-born were both daughters who died at an early age. The eighth was Niiga (b. 1950), who married and moved into her husband's home in Lughuari Village, Taizi Township. The next two children were both girls who died of smallpox at an early age: Wanshuuhua died when she was eight and Wujijji died when she was only three. The eleventh-born was my younger brother, Qilunbog (b. 1958), a farmer.

I recall Wanshuuhua and Wujijji playing together at the foot of a slope by our courtyard the day before they died. The two died one after another after suffering from smallpox. Their deaths caused Mother extreme grief. She wept the next day when she saw her two daughters' footprints that they had made in the dust at the foot of the slope the day before. At that time, children did not wear shoes in the summer until they were ten or eleven. I don't know where one of the daughters was buried, but the other was buried in a ravine in the Mantuula area. Some people said Father opened a path to Mantuula by himself, which meant he had to regularly go to the ravine to inspect the corpse. If the corpse had been clawed or uncovered by animals, Father would dutifully again bury what remained.

I began babysitting Wanshuuhua and Wujijji and my young brother, Qilunbog, when I was six or seven years old. I also assisted my older sister, Puriji, who heated the *bankang*<sup>1</sup> and cooked when my parents went out to work in the fields.

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<sup>1</sup> Historically, Mongghul bedrooms had an adobe platform divided into a *yikang* and *bankang*. An opening was made at the center of the *bankang* so that it was easier to heat by putting fuel (straw and animal dung) through the opening. Five to six planks covered the opening once the heating materials were put inside and could be removed a couple of days later. The *yikang* was built of adobe bricks and heated by an oven from outside the room. The father and the sons of the family slept on the felt-covered *yikang*, while the wife, daughters, and babies slept on the *bankang* without a bed cushion. This allowed the baby's urine to easily pass inside the *bankang* and their excrement could easily be scraped inside. Sleeping on a *bankang* is

Before Mother left to work in the fields, she told us to stay inside and bolt the front gate. She said, "If you go outside, you will be taken away by people who often steal children." We were then too scared to go outside until about a year later when we were more grown up.

I never herded sheep, but Father did so for our village production team. I was about fifteen years old during the three-year difficult period (1959-1961). At that time, my family suffered from starvation. Normally, potatoes were harvested during the eighth lunar month in our area. However, due to being so short of food, my elder sister and I, as well as some other village girls, went to Qasizi Village about five kilometers away, where we dug potatoes from the frozen earth in the second lunar month with an axe. Each time we had gathered one *sheng*<sup>1</sup> of potatoes, we took the potatoes to my home and boiled them to eat the next morning. In addition, my older sister Puriji and I collected *gugusai* '*sonchus oleraceus*' and then boiled and ate its leaves and stems. We also collected oats, which we milled in our family's small stone hand-mill before cooking it into gruel. It was in this way that my family survived the extreme three-year food shortage.

#### LIFE IN MY HUSBAND'S HOME

During the Spring Festival in 1962, I wore a long, full woolen robe that reached my heels and that had wide sleeves. The front of the gown overlapped on the right side, and buttoned under the right arm and down the side. I wore blue cotton trousers. A hem of red cotton cloth was sewn on the lower leg of my trousers. I was so proud to wear these clothes. In 1963 when I was seventeen, I married and moved here.

When I was a daughter in my mother's home, my parents did not allow me to do much heavy work. What's more, farm work in Yomajaa Village was less strenuous than here in Tughuan Village. I enjoyed my life in my parents' home. However, when I married, my life

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uncomfortable because it lacks a cushion and it emits smoke. Babies occasionally fell into the *bankang* through the uneven planks and suffered serious burns (Limusishiden and Juguì 2010:38).

<sup>1</sup> *Shangzi* refers to a variable volume unit used as a container to measure grain.

dramatically changed. Mother-in-law asked me to do heavy fieldwork, carry buckets of water, load bags onto horses, and all kinds of work in and out of the courtyard. My husband's family had a lot of farm land. If I didn't work hard, Mother-in-law and the village production team heads scolded me.

When I visited my parents' home, I complained that they had arranged my marriage while I was so young. After describing the heavy work I had to do without being allowed to rest, my parents replied that it was my fate.

When my first son, Limudanzhuu (b. 1966) was born, he became the first grandson in my husband's family. He was regarded as a *gaqan* 'treasure' and the whole family was excited. To protect him, the family *purghan*<sup>1</sup> forbade Limudanzhuu and me from visiting my mother's home for two years. During that time, I often cried because I missed my parents, my siblings, and my home so much. My parents rarely visited me, but my younger sister, Niiga, regularly came, riding a small yellow colt. Two years later, when you (Limusishiden) were born, the restriction against my visits was removed and I was allowed to visit Mother's home again.

Once, Niiga visited and asked me to return with her to our parents' home. I then held you and walked to Yomajaa Village with my younger sister. Father's maternal uncle from Haliya Village, Dongshan Township had given my parents a sheep leg and wanted me and you to come so we could have meat.

Another time, when I carried you in my arms to my parents' home, Father's maternal uncle had given them a pastry. Father stored it and waited for me to arrive before eating it.

In the past, visiting my mother's home was difficult. I had to walk a long way with my baby in my arms, which made my arms sore for several days. I could only stay in my parent's home for the time Mother-in-law allowed. If I stayed longer, she severely scolded me. I was always hungry when walking to my husband's home because there

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<sup>1</sup> The *purghan/pram* is a deity in the form of an image in a sedan chair, or a cloth-covered pole held by four men or a single man, respectively. For more on the *purghan/pram*, see Limusishiden and Jugui (2010:23).

was little food during those years of food shortages and there was no place to eat along the way.

Once I returned to my husband's home from my mother's home, put down my baby on the ground in the courtyard, and began munching on a piece of bread. Mother-in-law then said, "You are hungry after returning from visiting your parents? I had so much to eat after visiting my parents' home I didn't need to eat for three days." Her sarcasm made me so sad that tears rolled down my cheeks. I never forgot this. She was mocking me. There was nothing I could say or do. It was a mother-in-law's sovereign right to behave this way.

Each time I traveled to my husband's home, Father came with me as far as Capuzi 'Tea Room' in Larilang Village.<sup>1</sup> A former monk ran this place, selling tea in two rooms near Larilang Village. A deep gully was located by the tea room. Many crows nested on the steep cliffs. Those passing by had to walking along a narrow path. We never asked for tea from the Tea Room. Instead, Father smoked his pipe and I nursed my baby. After resting, Father said goodbye, turned, and got ready to walk back to his home to the west. I held my baby in my arms, said goodbye to Father, and then walked to the east where my husband's home was located.

An hour later, when I reached the Huarin River, I would put my baby on the riverbank, drink some water using my hands, and nurse my baby. I then rolled my trouser legs up above the knee, took off my embroidered shoes, tied the laces together, slung the shoes across my right shoulder, held my baby, and carefully crossed the river. Once across, I put the baby on the ground, dried my legs, rolled down my trouser legs, put on my shoes, and continued walking eastward. An hour later, I reached my husband's home.

How can I forget Father in my life? Countless times, he escorted me to the Tea Room. When he was about to leave, he always warned, "Don't nurse your baby on the roadside. Do it some distance away. Many evils are on the road and if you nurse your baby on the roadside, the baby will be easily attacked by evils and then may fall ill

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<sup>1</sup> A village located in a deep valley. The valley was a boundary line between Danma Town and Donggou Township.

or even die. And don't ask strangers to hold your baby because some strangers have evils on their body that can hurt your baby!"

One time when my paternal grandparents quarreled, Grandmother took her nursing baby (Qishiai) and fled to her parent's home. On the way, she felt hungry and tired. She encountered a woman who was in mourning for her father. The woman helped Grandmother by holding her baby son in her arms. One day later, when they reached her parent's home, my uncle suddenly lost his eyesight. Grandmother's parents immediately scraped his eyes with their fingernails. Finally, one eye recovered but the other remained blind.

One day I carried you (Limusishiden) to Mother's home in Yomajaa Village. You were just a baby and just old enough to sit by yourself. As I held you and walked down the lane, I met a man from Qighaan Dawa Village, who had come to mill grain. At that time, there were several mills and oil presses in Yomajaa Village and people from Qighaan Dawa often came to my parents' village to mill their grain. The man and I talked for a bit in the lane. Later that evening, you couldn't nurse because your mouth had so many blisters. There was no medicine to treat it. Later, we learned that the man had brought evil, which had attacked you.

Mongghul girls who were fifteen or sixteen years old began menstruating. During the menstrual period, they used some old cloth or cotton as a pad. If there was no old cloth or cotton, they had to regularly urinate, or the menstrual blood flowed on their trousers.

## MY CHILDREN

I gave birth to seven children. My first-born was a son who died within a month of his birth; my second-born son was Limudanzhuu; the third-born was you (Limusishiden, b. 1968); the fourth-born was my only daughter, Qiyansuu (b. 1971); the fifth-born was Niidosirang (b. 1974); the sixth child was a boy who died at the age of four from diarrhea; and the seventh child was Danjansirang (b. 1978).

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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

*bankang* 板炕, a sleeping platform

*boqi* (*boji* 簸箕), winnowing tray

*buli*, captured into

*buliya*, capturing

Buqang, a person's name

Capuzi (Chapuzi 茶铺子), a tea room

Chinja (Chenjia 陈家) Village

Daitong Muruun (Datong 大通) River

Dakuaishidan, a place name

Danjansirang, a person's name

Danma 丹麻 Town

Datong 大通 County

dgon lung byams pa gling དགོན་ལུང་བྱམས་པ་གླིང་།, a monastery name

Donggou 东沟 Township

Donghe 东和 Township

Dongshan 东山 Township

Fuguihua 富贵花, a person's name

*ga fu*, guafu 寡妇, widow

Gansu 甘肃 Province

*gaqan*, treasure

*gugusai*, *sonchus oleraceus*

Halija (Xialijia 下李家) Village

Hara Bulog (Heiquan 黑泉) Village

Hualian (Hualin 桦林) Valley

Huang 黄, a surname

Huarin (Hualin 桦林) Village

Hui 回, an Islamic nationality in China

Huushinjjii, divorced woman

Huzhu 互助 County

Limudiinjog, a person's name

Jangama, a village name

Ji 吉, a surname

Jugui, a person's name

Juhuaajii (Juhuajie 菊花姐), a person's name

Labrang (Labulensi 拉卜楞寺), a monastery's name

Larilang, a village name  
 Li Dechun 李得春, a person's name  
 Limog Ama, a village name  
 Limudanzhuu, a person's name  
 Limujaxi, a person's name  
 Limusishiden, a person's name  
 Limuqog, a person's name  
 Liuziai Aadee, Six Fingers Grandfather  
 Lughuari (Dacaizigou 大菜子沟) Village  
 Luxuu (Luoshao 洛少) Village  
 Ma 马, a surname  
 Ma Zhongbao 马忠宝, a person's name  
 Maja Raxi (Zhuozhatan 卓扎滩) Village  
 Mantuula, an area name  
 Mongghul (Tu 土), Monguor, Mangghuer, Tu  
 Naja (Najia 纳家) Village  
 Naringhuali (Dongshan 东山) Township  
 Niidosirang, a person's name  
 Niiga, a person's name  
*niudaari*, a traditional Mongghul headdress  
*njasi*, plow  
*purghan/pram*, a deity  
 Puriji, a person's name  
 Qasizi, a village name  
 Qighaan Dawa (Bayahe 白牙壑) Village  
 Qilunbog, a person's name  
 Qinghai 青海 Province  
 Qingming 清明, Tomb-Sweeping Day  
 Qishiai (Qishier 七十二), a person's name  
 Qishihua 七十花, a person's name  
 Qiyansuu, a person's name  
 Quxjang, a person's name  
 Rangdin, a village name  
 Rgulang, Dgon lung byams pa gling, Youningsi  
 Rnqan, Rin chen རིན་ཆེན་, a person's name  
 Saihua (Siyuehua 四月花), a person's name  
*shangzi (sheng 升)*, a volume unit

Sitan 寺滩 Village

Szanghuali (Nianxian 年先) Village

Taizi 台子 Township

Tianzhu 天祝 County

Tughuan (Tuguan 土官) Village

*tuuyang*, a traditional Mongghul marriage form

Wanshuuhua (Wang Shouhua 万寿花), a person's name

Weiyuan 威远 Town

Wujiiji, a person's name

Wushi 五十 Town

Yaozigou 鷓子沟, a place name

*yikang*, a heatable sleeping platform

Yomajaa (Yaoma 姚麻) Village

Youningsi 佑宁寺, a monastery's name

Zhaxi, a person's name

Zhucha 朱岔 Village

Zhumashiji, a person's name

Zhumazang, a person's name

A YA RDZI HERDING WOMAN'S EARLY LIFE

Blo bzang ལྷོ་བཟང་།

ABSTRACT

Blo bzang describes his mother's (Dkar mo rgyal, b. 1962) early life in an A mdo Tibetan herding community presently (2018) located in Rkang tsha (Gangcha) Village, Rkang tsha (Gangcha) Township, Ya rdzi, Zhon hwa (Xunhua) Salar Autonomous Country, Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China.

KEYWORDS

A mdo Tibetan women, Mtsho sngon, Qinghai, Tibetan biography

Dkar mo rgyal carries her granddaughter during the time of her youngest son's wedding on the summer pasture of Rkang tsha (Gangcha) Village, Rkang tsha (Gangcha) Township, Ya rdzi (Xunhua) Salar Autonomous County, Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, PR China (summer 2017, Blo bzang.).



I am Blo bzang (b. 1989) from Rkang tsha (Gangcha) Village, Rkang tsha (Gangcha) Township, Ya rdzi (Xunhua) Salar Autonomous Country, Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. This story is about my mother, Dkar mo rgyal (b. 1962). Mkha' re is her short name. I recorded her life experiences in August 2017 when I was at home. I present her early life in this text and write it in the first person.

That night, my grandmother, Klu mo sgyid (1920-2007), hurried to help my mother, Klu mo tshe ring (b. 1945), who lay on a yak-skin cushion in the right side of the tent. She took deep breaths. In the light of an oil lamp, I could see that she was sweating. Later, my father, Dkon mchog nyi ma (b. 1944), took me in his sheepskin robe pouch to the tent of our neighbor, A pha bstan dar. I slept with Father there but, I missed Grandmother.

The next morning, I saw Mother holding a baby in her arms. The baby didn't open her eyes.

That morning, Father chanted scriptures more loudly than usual, while he sat in his normal place to the left of the stove, in the left part of the tent. Maybe he was happy with the arrival of his second daughter, Bsod nams sgyid. I was not interested in the baby, my first sister. I was only interested in my dear grandmother.

Grandmother took constant care of me. I loved it when she carried me. One sunny day, she carried me up some hills as she was herding yaks. We ate *zho brdzis* 'roasted barley flour mixed with yogurt' for lunch. I drank milk from my *nu khug* 'small lamb-stomach bag'. Grandmother drank nothing, she just ate *zho brdzis* with the other local herders, who were all very talkative.

When it was only Grandmother and me, she sang. When she drove our yaks back home, she sang *ma Ni* songs. I listened and slept. When I woke up, it was already dark, and I was still on her back. She busily tied the yaks in the pen.

I woke up because I had to pee. In fact, I had peed several times in her robe that day. Grandmother had carried me the whole day. She took me into the tent, and cleaned her robe, and me. She poured milk into my *nu khug*, and then took a milk pail and returned to the yak pen to milk. I nursed my *nu khug* and didn't look at my little sister, even when she was crying.

Three months later, Grandmother, Mother, and some neighbor-women made felt by a river. I played nearby. I suddenly remembered my little sister, whom I had not seen for several days. I went to Grandmother, put my arms around her neck, and asked, "A ma klu mkho<sup>1</sup> 'Grandmother', where is our *lo lo* 'baby'?"

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<sup>1</sup> A ma = mother. She often called her grandmother "A ma klu mkho'.

She said, "We gave your little sister to Uncle Skybs de."

Uncle Skyabs de was Mother's older brother. He had married when he was fourteen and his wife was thirteen. They had no children. My little sister became their *bu skal ma* 'step-daughter' when she was three months old, and I was five years old. I rarely saw her after that.

Father and Mother then drove our sheep to where there was more grass and didn't return for several months. Meanwhile, Grandmother and I lived in our big tent, in a small valley, and took care of our yaks. I had no playmates.

One afternoon, I played with my stone toys outside of our tent. When I grew tired of playing, I went inside the tent and asked Grandmother for some *rtsam pa*. She gave me a little. After I had eaten it, I asked her for some milk. She poured some for me. Grandmother never refused my requests. I drank the milk. It tasted different. I stopped drinking it and asked Grandmother for some bread. She said, "The bread is all finished, but soon I'll make more, and give you a fresh piece."

I cried and cried. Grandmother held me and tried to stop me from crying, but I didn't. Finally, she took a piece of candy from a *mar sgam* 'wooden box usually containing butter,' put it in her mouth, and then spit it into my mouth. It was so sweet and delicious that I stopped crying. Usually, when I was bothered, she told me folktales, made jokes, sang, and taught me *ma Ni* songs. That afternoon, after I finished the candy, she taught *ma Ni* songs. Here are some of the songs she sang:

### Song One

འགོ་རྒྱལ་པ་དང་མཐོ།  
 ཇིན་ཅན་ཇིན་གཞོ་གྱིས་ཨང།  
 'gro drug pha dang ma'o  
 drin can drin gzo gyis ang

ཨྱོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་ཤྱི།  
 ཨྱོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་ཤྱི།  
 བྱམས་པ་ཕྱོགས་མད་དགའ།  
 དག་གཞེན་རྒྱལ་ལ་སྒྲོམས་ཨང།

byams pa phyogs med dka'o  
dgra gnyen kun la sgoms ang

ཨོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་སྒྲོ།  
ཨོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་སྒྲོ།

### Song Two

མགོན་ཐུགས་རྩེ་ཆེ་མངའ་བླ་མ་དང་།  
ལྷ་བདེ་ཆེན་གཏེར་མཛོད་ཉི་རུ་ཀ།  
བདག་མོས་པའི་བྱ་ཡི་ལམ་སྣ་རྒྱ་རྒྱུངས།  
mgon thugs rje che mnga' bla ma dang  
lha bde chen gter mdzod he ru ka  
bdag mos pa'i bu yi lam sna drongs

ཨོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་སྒྲོ།  
ཨོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་སྒྲོ།  
ཨོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་སྒྲོ།

ཆེ་འདི་ཕྱི་འཁྱེད་མ་ཁྱེད་རང་མཁྱེད།  
སྒྲོན་རྒྱུ་དཀར་བསོད་ནམས་བསགས་པའི་མཐུས།  
རྩེ་ན་དལ་འབྱོར་ཆང་བའི་མི་ལུས་ཐོབ།  
tshe 'di phyi'i 'dun ma khyed rang mkhyen  
sngon rnam dkar bsod nams bsags pa'i mthus  
rten dal 'byor tshang ba'i mi lus thob

ཨོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་སྒྲོ།  
ཨོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་སྒྲོ།  
ཨོ་མ་ཅི་པད་མེ་སྒྲོ།

### Song Three

མགོན་ཁྱེད་སྤྲུལ་དང་བཅས་པའི་ཐུགས་རྩེ་དང་།  
བདག་གིས་དགེ་བའི་སྤྱིད་བསགས་པའི་མཐུས།  
འདི་ནས་འཕོས་ཆོ་རྒྱལ་པས་བསྐྱུགས་པའི་ཞིང་།  
དགའ་ལྷན་གནས་སུ་རྒྱས་ཏེ་སྤྱེ་བར་ཤོག།



mgon khyod sras dang bcas ba'i thugs rje dang  
 bdag gis dge ba ji snyid bsags pa'i mthus  
 'di nas 'phos tshe rgyal pas bsngags pa'i zhing  
 dga' ldan gnas su rdzus te skye bar shog

ཨྲ་མ་རྩི་པད་མེ་ནི།  
 ཨྲ་མ་རྩི་པད་མེ་ནི།  
 ཨྲ་མ་རྩི་པད་མེ་ནི།  
 ཨྲ་མ་རྩི་པད་མེ་ནི།

I was so happy when I first saw my second sister, Sgrol ma skyid. I wanted to play with her, but she couldn't play with me, because she was only two months old so I prepared some toys for when she was older.

One early winter morning, I ran out of our tent wearing nothing, not even shoes, to chase some partridges running near our tent. I followed them up a hill behind our tent. When I reached the top of the hill, I had lost the partridges. I was very sad. Empty-handed, I returned home, cold and tired. I was so cold that I cried. Grandmother came, and held me in her robe, and asked me to hold her body, warming me quickly. My foot was so cold that it hurt when it was warmed.

The next morning, I went to chase the partridges again, this time throwing stones at them. My stones hit two partridges, and they fell to the ground. I delightedly hurried to get them. They were dead. I was unhappy that I couldn't catch them alive. When I took them home, Grandmother was both surprised and upset.

She said, "Mkha' re, don't kill partridges! They are mothers, what about their babies?"

I never chased partridges again.

That afternoon, a guest came to our home to drink Grandmother's milk tea. Everyone in the tribe said that her milk tea was delicious, and she was famous for it.

Grandmother prepared milk tea for the guest, while Mother took care of Sister. I played in the tent, and asked the guest to lift me up, so I could hold a rope tied to the top of the tent. I held that rope and swung back and forth. He helped me two times and then stopped because he was afraid I would fall and injure myself. I then piled up

some robes, and a wool quilt on the ground, and caught the rope. I did this again and again. Swinging was so much fun! As our guest drank milk tea, he watched me. As he was leaving, he said something to Grandmother. Later, when I asked her what he had said, she replied, "He said you needed to learn how to behave properly."

That evening, Mother reported that several sheep were missing. After Grandmother mentioned that Father would come home the next day, they decided that when Father returned, they would then search for the missing sheep.

The next day, as Grandmother and Mother waited for Father, I climbed the hill behind our home to watch for Father's arrival. I couldn't wait to play *the ge* 'sheep-leg bones game'. Father didn't come that day.

Early the next morning, Grandmother said that Father had arrived. I ran outside the tent and saw Father in the yak pen with three loaded yaks. When he had left home, he had put beef, mutton, and butter on the yaks and had gone to Bis mdo (Wendu), an agricultural area, to trade for grain. Our family had many friends there. This time, as usual, Father brought back a lot of grain, wheat flour, barley, bean flour, tea leaves, oil, and some bread. The bread was really delicious, and my favorite food. Father entered the tent and we began to have breakfast.

Grandmother asked, "Nyi ma, what happened to you? I thought you would arrive yesterday."

"I couldn't come during the daytime because I was afraid someone would see me, so I traveled at night, and rested during the daytime," he answered.<sup>1</sup> After breakfast, Father said that he was tired, and left to rest.

When he woke up that afternoon, I asked him to play *the ge*. He agreed, but said, "If I defeat you, I'll punish you." When we started to play, we took twenty *the ge* and divided them into groups of ten *the ge* each. One group was Father's and the other group was mine. We threw the *the ge* on the floor and checked to see which group had more horses. Each side of the *the ge* has a different animal name. The *the*

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<sup>1</sup> If someone saw him and informed government officials, they would punish him or a family member.

*ge*'s top is a "sheep," the bottom is a "goat," the left side is a "horse," and the right side is a "donkey." The front side is a "lion," and the rear is an "elephant." The master of the group with the most horses plays first.

There were three horses in my group. Father's group had only two horses so I played first. Father also had to give me ten of his *the ge*. I mixed them with my *the ge* and then I threw them on the floor. There were now twenty *the ge* on the floor. Some were sheep, some were goats, some were horses, and some were donkeys. It was very difficult to have a lion or an elephant, because the lion or elephant side had to be on top. Fortunately, I had an elephant. If you had an elephant you could exchange it for a sheep, goat, horse, or donkey. When you changed an elephant for an animal, you had to use your nose to touch the side of the *the ge* indicating the animal of the *the ge* you wanted. You were not allowed to use your hands. I changed my elephant for a horse, because a horse was near my elephant.

Actually, I wasn't a very skillful player.

I started to play. First, I hit a sheep with one of my sheep, picked it up, and saved it. Next, I hit a goat with one of my goats. Third, I hit a donkey with one of my donkeys, but I failed because my donkey hit a sheep, which broke the rules and I lost the chance to continue playing. I thus got two *the ge* the first time I played.

Father then threw his *the ge* on the floor. He was a very good player, rarely made any mistakes, and got most of the *the ge*. During this game, I got only two *the ge*, while Father won with eighteen.

We played a second time. This time, I got eleven *the ge* and Father got nine.

We played several times, and I won many of them. I was very happy and excited to win, even though I knew Father was letting me win. That was a big reason I loved playing with Father.

Later, Mother came home from driving our sheep, and told Father about the missing sheep. Father searched for our missing sheep for several days, but he never found them.

Over the years, men held many meetings in our community about protecting the grassland, changing pastures, and government announcements. One day, Father came back from a government meeting and said, "The government announced that we must send our

children who are seven and older to school. If we don't, the government will punish us."

I was eight years old.

One early morning, Father took me to school on horseback. I thought the school building was the most beautiful building I had ever seen. The classrooms were made of adobe walls with wood paneling. The ceiling and poles had many colorful drawings of flowers, and other objects I did not recognize. This beautiful school greatly attracted me. Later, I learned that the building was a former monastery. We had lunch at school and then returned home that afternoon.

I had twenty-two classmates and two teachers. One taught math, and one taught Chinese. They were both Tibetan.

Our math teacher was kind, and never scolded us, even if we didn't understand what he was teaching. However, our Chinese language teacher was very strict. When he was angry, he scolded us, calling us "animals." We adopted this, and scolded each other using "animal," though we didn't know what "animal" meant.

We had two Chinese books, one about Chinese phonetics, and the other was Chairman Mao's writings. In our first Chinese class, the teacher entered and told us to open Chairman Mao's book. He read some sentences and told us to repeat them, and we did so, both carefully and loudly. He walked over to me and asked, "Do you walk on your feet or on your head?"

"I don't know," I answered, puzzled.

He struck my shoulder and said I was holding my book upside down. I didn't know I was holding it that way, I just knew I was holding a book. He then ordered me to stand outside the classroom until lunchtime.

On the way home, the boys fought with each other. Sometimes, the girls fought with the boys, but girls never fought with other girls. Our class only had four girls, and we helped each other when the boys bullied us.

One afternoon, we fought terribly. We three girls walked home together, and the boys scolded us, saying, "Female dog! Female fox!"

We yelled back, calling them, "Male wolf!" There were seven boys, and they ran at us. Two boys came to beat me, but they couldn't knock me down. Then a boy took some wet yak dung, and forced it into

my mouth, so I bit his finger hard. He immediately held his finger, and I saw blood on his hands. I escaped, and ran away, and saw Ri lo also escape. Mkha' 'gro mtsho, was taller than all the boys, and twice as strong. As we ran, the boys chased us, and threw stones at us. Mkha' 'agro mtsho threw a big stone back at them, which hit a boy in the head. He fell and we heard him crying. We didn't look back and ran more quickly.

When I got home, I told Grandmother, who stopped me from attending school for a month.

When I next went to school, I found some of my former classmates were absent, but my friend, Mkha' 'agro mtsho, was still there. That morning, Grandmother had given me three *yuan*, and told me to buy candy for her. After class, Ri lo, Mkha' 'agro mtsho, and I went to a shop and bought three *yuan* of candy, filling a cloth bag. I would attend school for several days, and then stop for a month or more. I attended school off and on for a total of eight years.

When I was sixteen, it was time to attend the township school, but Father told the government officials that I was very ill so I never had to go.

That same year, the government gave me my own livestock - two female yaks. The milk, butter, and cheese from the two female yaks belonged to me, and I didn't need to give any of it to the government officials. I was delighted, and sometimes teased my sister, Sgrol ma skyid, by saying, "I have my own female yaks. I can drink milk, and eat *rtsam pa* with plenty of butter, while you don't have any."

She would cry and call Father. Then I would say I was joking, and I would promise to give her all my milk and butter. This made her stop crying. Later, I would say it again, she would again cry and call Father, and I would repeat what I had said before. I made Sister cry several times a day. I thought it was funny to make her cry, and then stop crying.

I had a third sister, Sha bo sgrol ma. When she was three years old, Mother's older sister took her to her home, because she had only one daughter of her own. Mother cried because she missed Sha bo sgrol ma. I lost Third Sister, but I had a little brother, my parent's fifth child.

By this time, I no longer bullied Sister, and started to help our family. Sister Sgrol ma skyid herded the sheep, and I took care of our yaks.

Sister and I usually slept with Grandmother, who told us interesting folktales and riddles. Every evening we listened to her. One evening, she mentioned my grandfather, who I never saw. When I asked her about Grandfather, she said:

I married him when I was seventeen, and he was twenty. After a year, we had our first child, Dkon mchog nyi ma, your father. Your grandfather often did terrible things in our community, and in other places, too. He wouldn't come home for several days, and sometimes for several months. When he did return, he would bring many things for us, even leopard, otter, and fox skins. He once brought me a beautiful coral necklace - the one your mother wears now.

He loved our son, our only child, more than me. He would bring home cloth and sew our son clothes himself. One day, some of his friends came to our home, and discussed going somewhere. The next day, he left with them. I didn't know where they had gone, but I believed that one day, he would return home.

A month later, I heard that he had been killed, but I didn't believe it. I had heard such gossip several times before, as he was a real troublemaker. Finally, he returned home very happily. All his friends had returned home earlier, after a fight with Ma Bufang's soldiers in Reb gong. They gave me your grandfather's rifle, sword, and amulet. I accepted what they gave to me, but in my heart, I waited for his return. I took care of the family. I took special care of our son, especially your father, who was only six years old then.

I met many difficulties. I really worried when some monks and laymen came to our village looking for seven-year-old boys. They said they were looking for their *bla ma*'s reincarnation. They came to my home and asked many questions about my son. I answered their questions, but finally I said, "I know my son, and he isn't a holy *bla ma*'s reincarnation, he is a normal child," but they still took his name. Several days later, I heard that they had chosen three boys, and one was their *bla ma*'s reincarnation. My son was one of the three. I worried that if they took my son, I would

have nothing. After a month, they identified their *bla ma*'s reincarnation, and I was very glad that it wasn't my son.

Grandmother also told us her own stories. Many were very humorous. I listened to Grandmother's stories for twenty years.

When I was twenty-one years old, my parents told me that a family had asked me to be their daughter-in-law. I agreed.

One summer day, my parents held a very big wedding for me, and then I moved to my husband's home. I really missed Grandmother, and my parents, but the days passed quickly.

A year later, I had our first child, a daughter.

Some years later, my husband became a doctor, and had a government job in our home township. He was responsible for our family and children. I have five children, two daughters, and three sons, and have never worried about food and clothes for our children.

#### NON-ENGLISH TERMS

a ma klu mkho ཨ་མ་ཀླུ་མ་ཁོ།  
 a pha bstan dar ཨ་ཕ་བསྐྱེན་དར།  
 bis mdo བིས་མདོ།  
 bla ma བླ་མ།  
 blo bzang བློ་བཟང་།  
 bsod nams sgyid བསོད་ནམས་སྒྱིད།  
 bu skal ma བུ་སྐལ་མ།  
 Chairman Mao, Mao zhu xi 毛主席  
 dkar mo rgyal དཀར་མོ་རྒྱལ།  
 dkon mchog nyi ma དཀོན་མཆོག་ཉི་མ།  
 Gangcha 岗察  
 Haidong 海东  
 klu mo sgyid ཀླུ་མོ་སྒྱིད།  
 klu mo tshe ring ཀླུ་མོ་ཚེ་རིང་།  
 lo lo ལོ་ལོ།  
 Ma Bufang 马步芳  
 ma Ni མ་ཉི།  
 mar sgam མར་སྐམ།

mkha' 'gro mtsho མཁའ་གྲོ་མཚོ།

mkha' re མཁའ་རེ།

mtsho shar མཚོ་ཤར།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

nu khug ལུ་ཁུག།

nyi ma ཉི་མ།

Qinghai 青海

reb gong རེབ་གོང།

ri lo རི་ལོ།

rkang tsha ཀང་ཇ།

rtsam pa རུས་པ།

Salar, Sala 撒拉

sgrol ma skyid སྒྲོལ་མ་སྐྱིད།

sha bo sgrol ma ཤ་བོ་སྒྲོལ་མ།

skyabs de སྐྱབས་དེ།

the ge ཐེ་གེ།

Wendu 文都

Xunhua 循化

ya rdzi ཡ་རྩི།

zho brdzis ཞོ་བརྩིས།

zhon hwa ཞོན་མ།



TIBETAN WOMEN'S DAILY LIFE: FIRE, FUEL, WATER  
COLLECTION, COOKING, AND CHILDCARE

Rdo rje don 'grub རོ་རྒྱལ་དོན་ལྷན་པ། (Duojiieduanzhi 多杰端智,  
Independent Scholar)

ABSTRACT

The daily lives of Lha mtsho skyid, Klu mo, and Tshe thar skyid, Tibetan women living in impoverished A bo rgyud (Awubuju) Tibetan Village, Gser gzhung (Jinyuan) Township, Dpal lung (Hualong) Hui Autonomous County, Mtsho shar (Haidong) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province in May 2011 are described. Aspects of fuel collection, family relationships, food preparation, child care, schooling, water collection, and day-to-day anxieties are described, illustrating the reality of their daily existence.

KEYWORDS

Amdo Tibetan women, Hualong Hui Autonomous County Tibetan women lives, fuel collection, Tibetan daily life, rural Qinghai

## INTRODUCTION

I was in A bo rgyud Tibetan Village, Jinyuan Township, Hualong Hui Autonomous County,<sup>1</sup> Haidong City, Qinghai Province (see maps below) in May 2011, doing research on fuel use and collection by local Tibetan residents. This paper presents several narratives that detail the life of village women, illustrating the reality of their daily existence. The maps below illustrate this area:

Map of Qinghai Province.<sup>2</sup>Map of Haidong City, Qinghai Province.<sup>3</sup>

Jinyuan Township

<sup>1</sup> BA yan/PA yan, which is a town, are terms that are used for the county seat. These terms are also used interchangeably for the name of the county.

<sup>2</sup> An edited version of (Lincum 2013) at <http://bit.ly/2ol7n7f> (accessed 21 February 2018).

<sup>3</sup> An edited version of <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haidong> (accessed 21 February 2018).

Pad ma<sup>1</sup> and I were in his truck on the road leading from Jinyuan<sup>2</sup> Township Town to Hualong Hui Autonomous County Town. Pad ma was busy hauling bricks between the County Town and a village near the town in his home township. A sharp cry from halfway up a mountain track surprised us. Pad ma stopped and shouted back. It was Lha mtsho skyid from a nearby village. She must have been in her seventies. As soon as she heard Pad ma shout and saw that he had stopped his truck, she galloped down the mountain like a teenager.

We waited in the truck. As she neared, I quickly got out to greet her and suggested that she sit in the passenger seat. I tossed her hand-made wooden basket into the back of the truck and jumped into the back seat.

As the truck began moving, she asked me where I was from and the purpose of my visit. She had likely detected something about my Tibetan dialect that told her I was an outsider. She had heard of my county, but had no idea where it was, as was the case with most other village women who have never been out of Hualong County or even their natal village. Pad ma answered her on my behalf.

Lha mtsho skyid was tall and thin with a deeply etched face. I wondered where she was going and where she had been so early in the morning with a wooden basket. I thought she must have children. I also thought, given her age, she should have been at home, like other old women with children and grandchildren, who spend much of their later years engaged in religious activities.

Through Pad ma and Lha mtsho skyid's conversation, I learned that she was collecting fuel on the mountains while looking for a ride so that she might transport a pile of dung that she has collected a few days earlier back to her home. She confided that she had snuck away from her home that morning. Her son-in-law and her oldest grandchild frequently urged her to stay at home. Tough and weathered,

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<sup>1</sup> I have changed the names of people used in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> I use Tibetan and/or Chinese terms based on how they are used by local people. For example, "Hualong" is Chinese and "Ba yan" is Tibetan for the name of the county. However, A bo rgyud villagers use the Chinese term, so I have chosen to use "Hualong" in this paper.

she declared that she couldn't waste time doing nothing for the family.

I thought fuel collection was a huge amount of work for her, requiring a lot of time and energy. However, her strong steps and a determined posture suggested she was up to the task. I recalled the basket in the truck bed and imagined it filled with fuel on her bony back. I guessed her family was not well off, since she was still collecting fuel at such an advanced age. I admired her spirit, the sacrifices she was willing to make, and her concern for her family. I also thought her son-in-law should collect fuel. Like other women in A bo rgyud Village, she must have started collecting fuel at an early age and never stopped. She reminded me of one of my interviewees, Tshe thar skyid, who said, "The harsh and bleak experiences of fuel collection are carved in my heart and my worry about fuel is constant."

About twenty minutes later, she asked to get off. She said she would climb up the mountain for about thirty minutes to reach her dung pile. She offered us two bottles of a beverage she had bought. I was surprised and, of course, we didn't accept them, because we knew they must have been quite an expense if she had bought them. We politely declined. I wondered if they were gifts and doubted if she would drink them, but instead take them to her grandchildren. At the sight of a long mountain range, I wondered where among these mountains her dung pile was.

It was a humid day. The sun peeked out now and again, suggesting it might rain, but how much moisture would it provide to the bare mountains and the non-irrigated fields below the mountains? Recalling only one snowfall during my research site stay, I wondered, "Has the precipitation this relatively low land receives always been so limited?" The local environment was very important to villagers. It was their main source of life.

It was already mid-summer, but it was as if winter had just passed. All was bare. There was no sign of life re-emerging. On some mountains slopes, soil erosion was recklessly at work, ever expanding the area of destroyed land.

My contemplations after handing the old woman her wooden basket was interrupted when Pad ma told me that she had two sons and both were doing very well financially. I was surprised, but then realized why family members objected to her collecting fuel. I realized

that a life of hardship and fuel collection imperatives remained strongly fixed in her mind.

#### MORNING IN A BO RGYUD VILLAGE

I was awakened by Klu mo's footsteps. Like other women in the village, she was one of the first to break the silence of the village. Listening to her footsteps, I wondered what she was doing. I could hear her Tibetan robe gently fluttering as she walked. She eventually came to where I slept in a room that was about twice the size of the room she and her husband slept in. She walked across to her family's small shrine in the middle of a wooden wall. A copper goddess image was in the second of the three shelves in the cupboard. Pictures of *bla ma* kept it company. Listening to the clicking sound from the copper bowls that were offered on the table below the small shrine, I concluded she was emptying the water in the copper bowls and refilling them with clean water while murmuring scriptures I did not recognize. Once she finished her task, she quickly left the room. I turned off the electric heating pad underneath me, which had been on all night. I regretted not waking earlier and turning it off and thus reducing the family's electricity charge.

The door to Pad ma's room was ajar. Pad ma was sitting at the table on the *heezee*<sup>1</sup> when I entered to get hot water. Klu mo quickly reached for the blackened kettle next to a bread-baking pot, which also sat on the same metal stove. Wisps of smoke escaped from the stove, filling the room with a distinct odor. Klu mo's hands were smeared with wheat flour.

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<sup>1</sup> The Chinese term for *heezee* is *kang*. Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart (2008:26) write:

*Heeze* is a Tibetan word that lacks an accurate standard written form. Today, it is often written incorrectly in literary Tibetan as 'tsha thab' that translates to 'hot stove'. This is incorrect because the *heeze* is not a hot stove, rather, it is a hollow platform made of stones with a thin layer of dry, hard earth on top. Coals and smoldering straw and grain husks are placed inside to heat it. Felt is spread atop the *heeze*, which is where family members sleep and important guests sleep.

"You're up? Do you have a hangover?" she asked smiling, accentuating her protruding rosy cheeks. Her hand left a print on the tarnished kettle handle.

"I'm OK," I said and quickly stopped her pouring more hot water into the basin. I washed my face and hands outside in the courtyard.

"It snowed," I said cheerfully after I finished and returned to the small, low ceilinged room that I felt was perfectly designed for this high altitude area.

"Yes, it rained heavily and snowed afterwards," Klu mo remarked, gesturing, encouraging me to get up on the *heeze*. Pad ma had already finished breakfast and was savoring a cigarette on one side of the *heeze*, leaning against a wooden wall. A big picture of Lha sa adorned the wall. Underneath were pictures of the family taken at Sku 'bum.<sup>1</sup> Their children were living with their paternal grandfather who was retired now and living in the town where Sku 'bum was located. Klu mo told me that the children returned home once a year for the Tibetan New Year. She also said that she and Pad ma visited them after harvest, an annual ritual begun when their children started primary school. I noticed that their children's appearance contrasted with that of village children. The latter wore tattered clothes and had dark skin from exposure to the extreme weather. Klu mo was tense and had a very serious expression in the photo, which I attributed to her not often being photographed.

The *heeze* was still comfortably warm. Klu mo served me a cup of steaming milk tea after I settled on the *heeze*. Pad ma flicked his cigarette stub onto the brick-covered floor and announced the beginning of his day by picking up his cell phone and his leather shoulder bag.

Pad ma had sold his motorcycle to a villager. It was a good transaction, he said, but Klu mo disagreed, maintaining that Pad ma should have listened to her. Now he had to borrow motorcycles from relatives and other villagers, which he found embarrassing and

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<sup>1</sup> Sku 'bum is a Dge lugs monastery located twenty-three kilometers northwest of Zi ling City. The monastery is dedicated to Rje tsong kha pa (1357-1419), the founder of the Dge lugs sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

difficult. He then had to drive the borrowed motorcycle to the Township Town, leave the motorcycle with a family, and then drive his truck to the county town.

His truck was parked outside his home this morning, ready to transport a pig to a Township Town buyer. This was a relief for Klu mo, because she would no longer have to care for the pig. I soon heard the pig's hysterical squeals. A middle-aged villager, who had come the day before to ask for a ride to the county town, was asked to help get the pig in the truck. He was better dressed than the day before. "Bad timing," I thought. He immediately went out to help after rolling up the sleeves of his suit. I wished I could help, but realized there were enough helpers. Pad ma soon announced he was ready to leave and before I could stand up, he was already out the door.

Klu mo busily added fuel to the stove and made bread. She went to an adjacent room and returned with a handful of plate-size dung patties, which she broke into pieces by banging them against the hearth. Pushing aside the pot a little, she dropped pieces inside and quickly put the pot back as sparks flashed. Oily smoke from the pot and dung smoke mingled, permeating the room. A window in front of me and the door were open to let the smoke in the room escape. I could feel chilly air. Regardless of the health impacts from the smoke, I wished the door and the window were closed. The *heeze* was warm, that was all. Burning dung put little warmth in the room. I drank my cup of hot milk tea, appreciating how it warmed me.

Noticing my half-empty cup, Klu mo came with the kettle. I held my cup with both hands to show respect.

"All right," I said once my cup was full and added, "Today I don't think you will be able to collect caterpillar fungus."

"Yeah," she replied.

"It snowed, so it'll be wet," I said.

"Yes," she said, putting the kettle next to the pot on the stove when the pot started humming. She checked the bread and stacked it on another two pieces of bread on a metal plate. Before she left to fetch a fifth piece of dough, she added some dung to the stove and poured some oil into a cooking pot.

Through the window, I saw her coming with a round piece of dough. She put the dough carefully in the smoky pot and went into the

adjacent room. I heard chopping. She came back periodically to check the bread and turn it over. After about fifteen minutes, she replaced the bread pot with a pot for cooking dishes. She tossed cubes of beef and strips of potatoes into hot oil. This cooking pot was soon replaced by a bigger water kettle. Klu mo went into the bigger room where I slept with a bowl, poured milk tea into the bowl, added a lump of fresh butter, and offered it to me. My nearly-finished cup of milk tea was removed. She next put out a bowl of the potato dish for both of us. We ate separately. I remained on the *heeze* while she sat in front of the traditional stove.

This was our breakfast, a generous breakfast in this village of forty-three households. Fresh milk tea with fresh butter, newly baked bread, and even better, a dish with meat. There were village families who had no dairy products, because they had sold their livestock. There were also families who rarely ate vegetable dishes. Vegetables that Han Chinese occasionally brought and sold in the village were old and expensive.

"You like potatoes," Klu mo remarked as I finished a bowl of food.

"Yes, it's one of my favorites," I replied.

"Good. Pad ma doesn't like potatoes. Whenever he sees potatoes, he says, 'What's special about potatoes?' When planting and harvesting potatoes, we argue. We fed most of last year's potatoes to our livestock, since he doesn't like them and I couldn't finish them alone." Then she got up and went to fetch the kettle of milk tea to refill my bowl and hers. I chuckled and remained silent, not knowing what to say.

We each had several bowls of milk tea and finished the dish. Our breakfast was filling. As Klu mo was cleaning the small square table where I ate, I said that I was going to make a phone call and went out. The signal inside the room was weak.

I stood in front of the newly constructed village shrine to make the phone call. Dozens of homes were on the mountain slope below where I stood. Columns of smoke clambered from each adobe chimney protruding from roofs. A veil of mist over the village was slowly lifting. The overcast sky began to give way to the late sun. It would be a sunny day. While I was phoning my family, the sight of a school-aged girl



caught my attention. I had met her a couple of days previous while at her family's shop, which was one of two shops in the village. They both sold pretty much the same thing - basic life necessities and batteries, candles for the frequent blackouts, beer, cigarettes, liquor, and so on. Both shops were in the families' homes. The girl had told me that she didn't want to attend school. I was surprised and decided to interview her family. Thinking I might have a chance to do this day, I went to get my notebook. A group of men nearby were enjoying cigarettes and staring at me, an outsider.

"Where are your parents?" I asked an older girl, standing near the school-aged girl by her courtyard gate. The sun was already out, casting rays over the quiet village, summoning villagers still inside their houses to come out and enjoy the sunshine.

"My parents are not at home," she replied and then whispered into her sister's ear. They were dressed in simple clothes and both wore scarves on their heads. Cheap whitening lotion was smeared unevenly on their faces.

"Where are they?" I inquired.

"Father is there," the older sister announced, pointing to the group of men.

"What about your mother?" I continued.

"No mother," she said.

I asked no follow-up questions, thinking her mother might be dead, but my curiosity remained. I also felt a surge of sympathy. "Please call your father," I said.

She then called to her father, who came over and invited me inside their home. I was ushered into a large, cold room. A metal stove on one side of the room was cold. Fire only flickered in a traditional adobe stove that accommodated two pots. This stove was attached to the *heezee* that heated the *heezee* and was used to cook. A wooden barrier separated the *heezee* and the stove.

In the middle of my interview, the two girls and the father's younger brother announced that they would go collect caterpillar fungus as the weather has turned sunny. The younger brother had married and moved into a nearby village but had come back to collect caterpillar fungus.

About half an hour later, without realizing the time, I asked

Bsod nams if he was going to collect caterpillar fungus. Shaking his head, he said it was too late. I was speechless with regret. While leaving, I apologized for keeping him.

As the sun rode high in a clear sky, I thought, "Villagers must be happy with this weather. They'll collect caterpillar fungus in the distant towering mountains." Although sales of caterpillar fungi were a major source of cash income, results from a half-day would likely be insignificant.

The village seemed empty and was utterly quiet, except for periodic high-pitched voices coming now and again from the village school.

#### TSHE THAR SKYID

Tshe thar skyid woke up as usual and, as she had done every day since her youthful marriage, she cautiously pulled on her ragged Tibetan robe in darkness. If any of her eight children woke up, it would disrupt her entire day's work.

She carefully pulled up the quilt so it was under her son's chin. All of her children were sleeping fast on the *heeze*. She was relieved. She fumbled her way to a wooden bucket in the corner of the room and put it on her back outside the house. She sighed. Nobody was to be seen in the village. A few scattered stars glimmered in the sky as a crisp breeze stroked the village.

She started walking towards the river that originated in the mountains behind the village and then flowed down through a valley a half hour walk away. She fetched water there every morning. The wooden bucket weighed as usual on her slightly hunched back. Walking the same path she had trod countless times before, she heard vague conversation in the direction of the river, which delighted her.

As she got close to the river, Tshe thar skyid saw several women fetching water. She greeted them, filled her own wooden bucket, and then helped other women secure their filled wooden buckets on their backs. A woman of Tshe thar skyid's age helped her put her own bucket on her back.

After reaching the top of the valley together, the women separated. Tshe thar skyid trudged home alone. No lights were visible in houses. Like every other woman in the village, Tshe thar skyid did this every morning, like her mother, grandmother, and great grandmother had done before her.

Walking back home with a heavy bucket of water was uncomfortable. A wind suddenly raged, sending dust everywhere. Tshe thar skyid stopped. Her back was curved like a bow. Every now and then she gently brushed her eyes with her thumb. Blinking frequently, she steadily continued. After about one hour, Tshe thar skyid was panting and sweating.

She relaxed once she was back in her home and saw that her children were still asleep. She squatted slowly and unloaded the bucket. Her first task of the day was now completed.

Tshe thar skyid pulled ashes out from the adobe stove, went to the stacked bushes near her family's gate, and brought two dried bundles back inside. Before squatting in front of the stove, she poured water into a pot to boil water for breakfast. Preparing a handful of dried twigs, she lit a match and held the twigs against it. The twigs quickly caught fire. Tshe thar skyid's face shone in the flame. The fire seemed stable so she carefully put the flaming bundle in the stove and added more fuel. Beads of sweat glinted on her forehead. She stayed in front of the stove, and fed the fire with handfuls of bushes now and then until the water in the pot started hissing and thick curls of steam rose. Tshe thar skyid then retrieved two thermoses from a shelf and filled them with boiling water.

Dawn still had not broken. Tshe thar skyid replaced the water pot with a baking pot and brought two more bundles of bushes and added it to the single bundle that remained.

The wind was still howling. Tshe thar skyid was glad the fire would heat the cooling *heezee*. The children were sound asleep. She added more bushes to the fire. After preparing a thin, flat pot-sized piece of dough, she came back to the pot and stoked the fire until the pot was hot. She laid the dough evenly in the pot and then left to prepare another piece of dough before adding more fuel. She came back regularly to check the bread, and also to ensure that the fire did not run out of fuel. At times, splinters pricked her hands when she

brought bushes and adjusted the brush in the stove. After about an hour, she had finished baking four pieces of bread, which would be enough for the day. Bread was indispensable to their daily meals.

The second important predawn task was done. It was now time to collect fuel. She put the plate of bread into a pot, and then picked up the sharpened sickle and a ball of rope she had prepared the night before. Smoke drifted up from flickering, smoldering charcoal.

Newly boiled hot water and fresh baked bread were prepared, but it was too early for her eight children. There was still time before daybreak. She left her home with the sickle and rope.

Seeing nobody, Tshe thar skyid went to the first of her fuel collection group member's door and gingerly rapped. A woman who was Tshe thar skyid's age soon appeared. A mother of four, she was still nursing her youngest child. Together they called several women and formed their usual group of five. After greeting each other, they talked nonstop as they walked, their laughter echoing in the wind in the rock-strewn valley surrounded by snow-capped mountains. After about half an hour, they reached one of their fuel destinations. They climbed a towering mountain that had been stripped of bushes at the foot from their frequent collection. It had much grass for their livestock, but few conifer trees, the result of villagers' logging for house construction and sales. They immediately began cutting bushes as though they were reaping crops, gripping sickles in their right hands and clutching as many bushes as they could with their left hands. They piled each bunch near their feet to form a bundle. Running against time, each woman tied up her own bundles, gathering the usual six bundles of bushes within an hour.

Then they relaxed and caught their breath. A bit later, they laid the ropes they had brought on the grass and piled their bundles on top. After tying the bundles, they gripped one end of the rope. Pulling the rough ropes and harvesting bushes made their hands sore. Their discolored palms were smudged with leaf fragments.

When they all had their bundles on their backs and clenched the ropes in front of their chests, Tshe thar skyid walked to the bush piles behind everyone's back and helped them stand. Finally, Tshe thar skyid was assisted by two women who already had bundles on their backs.

One step at a time, they descended the mountain. The intense exertion caused by cautiously staggering down the slope made them sweat and pant. Everyone was quiet until they crossed a river, when Tshe thar skyid suggested they rest. They settled their burdens on boulders that they then reclined against. Eyes on each other, there was only silence, other than the sound of a river flowing in the distance.

Wondering if her eight children were still in bed and realizing dawn would soon come, Tshe thar skyid suggested they continue. Gazing at the mountains, Tshe thar skyid wondered in which direction Lha sa was. It was where her husband was working. She wished he was with her and their children. He was one of the very few locals working outside the village. She was proud of this. She felt lucky to have such a husband, although she had to care for the family alone. Such thoughts frequently crossed her mind. Many times, she felt challenged as she examined every detail of her many difficulties.

After a few more stops they reached the village where the group split as each woman headed toward her own home.

A blanket of clouds wafted away at the arrival of dawn, revealing lofty mountains faraway in the east that glowed, promising a sunny day. Tshe thar skyid unloaded the fuel in the yard and entered the living room, where her children still slept. At the creak of the wooden door opening and the sound of Tshe thar skyid's footsteps, her oldest child turned and gazed at her mother. Beads of sweat glued strands of hair against her forehead. At night, Tshe thar skyid told her oldest son, who was eleven years old, to look after his siblings in the morning during her absence if any woke up. He had been very responsible, and Tshe thar skyid smiled at him gratefully. Thinking that her children might sleep a bit longer, she walked back to the bundles of bushes she had just collected.

Tshe thar skyid took her arms out of her robe's long sleeves and tied the sleeves behind her. She unknotted two bundles of bushes and divided them into six smaller bundles, the usual amount she carried to the township town to sell.

When she went back inside, she found that all her children were now awake. With her oldest child's help, she dressed the children and folded all the quilts except for one, which was for the nursing child during naps. As Tshe thar skyid placed a short-legged wooden table in

the middle of the *heezee* and was about to get a plate of bread, her youngest child cried. Tshe thar skyid hurriedly returned with the bread and served warm water that she had prepared and poured a bowl of tea for herself. The children sat around the table on the *heezee*. Tshe thar skyid sat with her baby cradled against her breast, nursing him. Somehow, she managed to have some bread and then entrusted all her children to an elderly neighbor. Tshe thar skyid gratefully thanked her neighbor and returned home.

Her children were playing nearby with other children. She gulped down a bowl of water, cleaned the table, and went to stack the remaining four big bundles of bushes on her family's fuel stack just outside the house. Her family's fuel stack was not the biggest in the village, but it was also not the smallest. Her stack was about three meters tall and nearly reached the top of her home's adobe surrounding wall. With the six small bundles of bushes on her back, she met four women from her fuel collection group.

Tshe thar skyid and her peers would walk eight kilometers on a dirt track to the township town. Looking into the distance, Tshe thar skyid wondered when she and her group would reach the town and hoped that they would each be able to sell the six bundles of bushes. Some days, she had to leave some fuel at shops and pay them to keep the bundles until she returned.

#### REFERENCE

Rdo rje don 'grub. 2011. Fuel and Solar Cooker Impact in Ya na gdung Village, Gcan tsha County, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 10:153-175.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

dpal lung དཔ་ལུང་།

a bo rgyud ཨ་བོ་རྒྱུད།

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

Awubuju 阿吾卜具

bA yan བ་ཡན།

Bayan 巴燕

bla ma བླ་མ།

blo brtan rdo rje བློ་བརྟན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

bsod nams བསོད་ནམས།

dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།

Duojiueduanzhi 多杰端智

gser gzhung གསེར་གཞུང་།

Haidong 海东

Hualong 化隆

Hui 回

Jinyuan 金源

kang 炕

klu mo ལུ་མོ།

lha mtsho skyid ལྷ་མཚོ་སྦྱིད།

lha sa ལྷ་ས།

mtsho shar མཚོ་ཤར།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

pad ma པད་མ།

pA yan པ་ཡན།

rdo rje don grub རྡོ་རྗེ་དོན་གྲུབ།

rje tsong kha pa རྗེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ།

sku 'bum སྐུ་བུ་མ།

tshe thar skyid ཚེ་ཐར་སྦྱིད།

Xining 西宁

zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

# BOOK REVIEWS

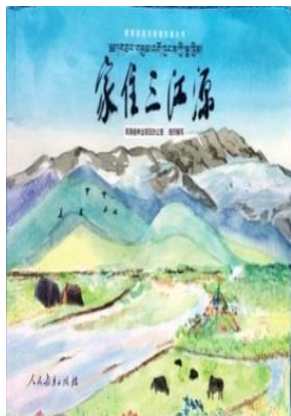


REVIEW: *HOME AT THE SOURCE OF THREE RIVERS*

Reviewed by Nyangchakja (Snying lcags rgyal

སྟོང་ལྷག་རྒྱལ། Niang Jijia 娘吉加)

Qinghai sheng lin ye xiang mu ban gong shi 青海省林业项目办公室



[Qinghai Provincial Forestry Project Office].

2017. *Gtsang gsum 'go khungs kyi sbra khyim*

གཙང་གུམ་ཀོ་ཁུངས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་མཁའ། *Wo jiazhu zai sanjiang*

*yuan* 我家住在三江源 [*My Home at the Source*

*of Three Rivers*].<sup>2</sup> Beijing 北京: Renmin jiaoyü

chubanshe 人民教育出版社 [People's

Education Press]. 93 pp. ISBN 978-7-107-

31607-4 (simplified Chinese, paperback

16.80RMB)

Established in 2000, The Three Rivers Source

National Nature Reserve (hereafter TRSNNR) comprises 152,300 square kilometers of the general region of Three Rivers' Source, which encompasses 363,000 square kilometers in the south of Qinghai Province (SNNR 2018). "The Three Rivers" refer to the Yangtze (Changjiang), Yellow, and Lancang (Mekong).<sup>3</sup> The region of the Three Rivers' Source, which has an area greater than that of Germany, has the country's highest altitude wetlands and supports globally important biodiversity. Known as "China's Water Tower," the area has key ecological value for China and our world.

Global warming and glacial melting have direct impact on the wetlands, lakes, wildlife, and the entire ecosystem in the TRSNNR,

Nyangchakja. 2018. Review: *Home at the Source of Three Rivers*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:236-246.

<sup>2</sup> Sanjiang yuan = Chinese Pinyin. "Source of Three Rivers" and "Three Rivers' Source" are used interchangeably in this review.

<sup>3</sup> The Yangtze River is the longest river in the country, reaching the East China Sea after flowing through eleven provinces, regions, and cities. The Yellow River is the second longest river in the country, while the Lancang (Mekong) leaves China, flowing through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

which is China's second largest nature reserve.<sup>1</sup> Rare wildlife protected in the nature reserve include snow leopards, Tibetan antelopes, wild yaks, wild ass, and black-necked cranes.

Mining, logging, fishing, and hunting were prohibited in TRSNRR in June 2017 during a trial regulation period (Xinhuashe 2017) and in January 2018, China announced its plan for the completion of a Three Rivers' Source National Park by 2020 (NDRC 2018), further emphasizing the importance given to this region by the central government.

*Home at The Source of Three Rivers* is divided into three parts: My Home the Three Rivers' Source, Spirits Around Us, and Nature and Us, that collectively (including the preface) feature twenty sparsely illustrated stories featuring sacred mountains and lakes, wetlands, the weather, plants, caterpillar fungus, forests, antelopes, snow leopards, black-necked cranes, brown bears, problems with garbage, black tents, and yaks.

Written in simplified Chinese, the text begins with a story and ends with a postscript. The latter notes that the Global Environment Facility (GEF),<sup>2</sup> the Qinghai Provincial Forestry Bureau, and the United Nations Development Programme as part of the Qinghai Three Rivers' Source Biodiversity Protection Project, all played a role in this book project. The reader is further informed that in order to achieve the goal of raising public awareness of ecological protection, Future Generations<sup>3</sup> compiled the book for primary and junior middle school students that includes awareness training materials in areas of the Three Rivers' Source.

The book features materials collected from interviews with and research on local community members, monks, and students and

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<sup>1</sup> The Chang Tang Nature Reserve in the Tibet Autonomous Region is twice as large.

<sup>2</sup> The GEF was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to address environmental problems. It has provided over \$17 billion in grants and mobilized an additional \$88 billion for 4,000+ projects in 170 countries (<https://www.thegef.org/about-us>, accessed 22 February 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Started in 1992, Future Generations focuses on teaching and enabling a process for equitable community change integrating environmental conservation with development by supporting global community-driven social change (<http://www.future.org>, accessed 25 February 2018).

teachers of primary and junior middle schools in the Source of the Three Rivers area.<sup>1</sup> Certain sections of the book were piloted in primary and junior middle schools prior to the publication.

Each story is followed by a brief, related poem. Each part is followed by relevant exercises (role play, games). Facts and figures related to the story are also presented.

Certain stories are based on folktales and proverbs. The content shows heavy editing, for example, in the first story, Laba's settled home is portrayed as an indication of "improved living conditions," reflecting a policy-driven decision to favor sedentary settlements and urbanization over a pastoral lifestyle. This is at odds with the story of seasonal movement and the value of mobile homes in Story Seventeen. However, most stories are positive about self-sufficient pastoral life and eco-friendly culture.

The book begins with *Song of Three Rivers' Source* describing each river's origin and path. "A Household at the Source of Three Rivers" (Preface) introduces a Tibetan family of five whose nomadic forebears moved seasonally without a fixed point of residence. However, in recent years, Laba and his wife (Yangjin) and their three children have settled in a permanent residence. Zhaxi, the eldest child, attends a school near their home. Curious about nature, he wants to be a scientist. Cairin attends the same class as his brother, wants to be a scholar, and is interested in Tibetan drama. Meiduo, the youngest, likes flowers and crafts made by her mother. She dislikes randomly discarded garbage.

Jiangcuo is Zhaxi's head teacher and is also from a herding community. He takes his students to the grassland to experience nature and hopes that all his students will attend university and return home to work. The story also introduces three of Jiangcuo's colleagues who organize cultural activities and attend conservation training in cities.

Zhaxi's Uncle Jiacao studies at a university. During the summer and winter holidays, he returns to his home county to organize social service activities. Zhaxi's Uncle Suonan herds with

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<sup>1</sup> Names of story contributors and dates of collection are not given.

Zhaxi's father and is familiar with various aspects of the grassland and mountains.

Zhaxi's classmate from Qumalai wants to build a school in his hometown so local children can attend school near their homes. Duoji, Laba's friend, is involved with environmental inspection, e.g., observing and taking notes on endangered wildlife and plants. Two of Laba's other friends have taken courses on environmental protection. Their hero is Suonan Dajie<sup>1</sup> who lost his life to the cause of protecting the Tibetan antelope.

## PART 1: THE SOURCE OF THREE RIVERS - MY HOME

Story 1: Where Do We Live? The story begins with a poem of four verses consisting of seven lines each, with each line featuring seven characters. The poem briefly introduces the origin and flow of the three rivers. Multiple conversations at breakfast time, making butter tea, preparing for herding, and children getting ready for school, reveal the location of Laba's home. Once at school, Zhaxi and Cairin begin asking why they live near many snow mountains, rivers, and lakes. Teacher Jiangcuo answers their questions and introduces the value of the Three Rivers' Source, giving the names of wildlife such as antelope, snow leopard, wild ass, wild yak, black-necked crane, and brown bear.

Jiangcuo emphasizes the importance of being friendly with nature and protecting the Source of Three Rivers. Students plan to share what they have learned with their parents once they return home.

Two maps accompany this story depicting the location of the Three Rivers' Source.

Story 2: Place of Three Rivers' Source further details the Source of the Three Rivers. Three important mountain ranges at the source of each river are introduced - Tang Gula, Bayan Kala, and Kunlun. Glacial melting, springs, and small lakes and tributaries near these mountain ranges form each river. The path of each river is then described.

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<sup>1</sup> Suonan Dajie (1954-1994), a former Vice Party Secretary of Zhiduo County, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. He died while protecting Tibetan antelope from poachers in the Kekexili area of the Three Rivers' Source.

A map of rivers and lakes with mountain ranges accompanies the story.

Story 3: Our Sacred Mountains begins with Zhaxi's grandfather explaining that the Tibetan Plateau was once an ocean with thick forests along the coast and home to many antelope and deer. Various birds sang lovely songs. One day, five dragons appeared out of the ocean and scared the animals away. Next, a rainbow with five bands of color appeared and became five *dakinis*, female spirits with special powers. The dragons then surrendered and became protective spirits. Later, the five dakinis became five peaks of the Himalayan Mountains and protected the region.

Zhaxi falls asleep while listening to this story and dreams about how the Himalayas were formed. Later, Zhaxi and Cairin find a fossil of a sea creature.

The story mentions Mount Ani Maqing, Gaduo Juewu Mountain, and the Yellow River with regard to their ecological value and local beliefs as to how they protect both people and nature.

Story 4: Our Holy Lakes is set during the Tibetan New Year period and describes pilgrimage to holy lakes, highlighting the value of water. Believing water to be a source of life, the story emphasizes prohibiting such activities as throwing garbage, dead animals and other polluting articles into lakes, as well as not washing clothes at spring sources and not fishing at the source of the Yellow River. The second half of the story explains the water cycle.

Story 5: Magical Wetlands highlights wetlands. In addition to providing a habitat for black-necked cranes and other wildlife, wetlands store rainwater, prevent flooding, purify water, and provide water to streams and rivers during drought. Wetlands are compared to the human body. Putting garbage into the wetland sickens the ecosystem in the same way that eating junk food harms the human body.

Story 6: Unpredictable Weather focuses on extreme weather conditions at the Three Rivers' Source. The average altitude of the area is 3,500-4,800 meters above sea level. The average yearly temperature is below zero Celsius. Weak sheep are endangered by very cold weather. The dramatic weather changes have led local herders to develop a sophisticated ability to predict weather, e.g., birds busy building

shelters for winter means heavy snow and black clouds sandwiching red clouds means hail is imminent.

Herding is presented as an opportunity to learn, outside a regular classroom, about nature.

## PART 2: SPIRITS SURROUNDING US

Story 7: Everything has a Life. Despite the harsh weather on the Tibetan Plateau, the grassland turns into a carpet of flowers and many other plants. Setting the story in a classroom, students create a writing assignment titled "Life." Their writings highlight that plants, flowers, wildlife, birds, water, land, and air have their own existence and are worthy of respect and protection. The class teacher emphasizes the importance of traditional values in protecting the environment and also the recently enforced laws protecting the Three Rivers' Source.

Story 8: Fascinating Caterpillar Fungus introduces the caterpillar fungus lifecycle. Giving the conditions of people collecting caterpillar fungus for commercial purpose, the story warns against destruction of the environment resulting from excessive digging of the fungus. It encourages moderate and environmentally-friendly digging that prevents desertification. Suggestions of an appropriate digging method are also provided.

Story 9: From a Seed to a Forest. The time and effort that seeds take to grow into trees and become forest highlights the value of forests. Forests along riverbanks in the Three Rivers' Source area are rich in biodiversity and, in general, forests are essential for the planet in absorbing carbon, maintaining soil quality, and so on. The danger of forest fires is emphasized.

Story 10: Tibetan Antelope: The Spirit of the Plateau highlights the iconic Tibetan antelope (chiru). From May to June, many pregnant antelopes migrate hundreds of kilometers from their grazing land to Kekexili to give birth. In late June, the mothers lead their babies back to the grazing area. With illustrations, the story introduces the antelope, its breeding and calving.

Poachers have focused on antelope, eager for the underfur (shahtoosh) that is eventually woven into illegal shawls that sell for

\$4,000-40,000USD each.<sup>1</sup> Famous antelope protector Suonan Dajie is admired by many pupils. Laba encourages his three children to protect the Three Rivers' Source when they grow up.

A brief introduction to wildlife protection law is also given.

Story 11: The Snow Leopard - King of the Snow Mountains begins with the picture of a snow leopard that Uncle Duoqi took in the wild. It was Zhaxi's first time to see a picture of a snow leopard. Fascinated, he asks many questions. Uncle Duoqi explains that the snow leopard cannot be easily seen and that it resides in hidden areas of deep mountains. As he explains that snow leopards eat blue sheep and argali, Zhaxi asks if it is possible to not let it eat those animals. Uncle Duoqi then gives details of how the ecosystem is balanced by what the animals eat for survival. The point is made that snow leopards are very rare and that they are as precious as pandas.

Story 12: Black-Necked Crane-Auspicious Bird. The Black-Necked Crane is presented via both a story and illustrations. Considered a sacred and auspicious bird, it features in *thangka* paintings and in the Gesar Epic. Birds lay one or two eggs in May that require thirty-one to thirty-three days to hatch.

### PART 3: NATURE AND US

Story 13: The Web of Life introduces the ecosystem, e.g., sunlight, plants, carbon, yak dung; and animals: rodents, pikas, rabbits, wolves, snakes, vultures, and fox. A key takeaway is the ecological value of plants and animals and their interconnectedness.

Story 14: Brown Bears that Enter Homes describes how Laba and his friend, Duoqi, drive to a remote home where they measure the size of fences that are needed to protect the family from brown bears. A brown bear recently broke into the home and ate and messed up the family's stored food supply. The story explains that locals in the area coexist peacefully with wildlife as epitomized in the saying "Land is divided into six pieces, of which one is for wildlife." Recognizing that

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<sup>1</sup> Three to five antelope die for each shawl (<http://bit.ly/2p4Op65/>, accessed 13 March 2018).

human encounters with brown bears in the home can be life-threatening, Duoji explains to the family how to protect themselves from such incidents by sharing some well-illustrated brochures. He also gives details of subsidies provided by the local government for property loss resulting from such encounters.

Story 15: Balance in Nature emphasizes how nature treats all beings on earth fairly, which is nowhere more evident than at the Three Rivers' Source. The Plateau's rare and diverse creatures have coexisted for a long time in their own way. The national nature reserve provides even more protection to the environment. However, people often extract natural resources and harm nature. Zhaxi and Cairin are shocked when they encounter a river that has been deeply excavated that now has no fish. They report the situation of illegal digging and mining to the Environmental Protection Department.

In Story 16: A New Challenge for the Plateau - Garbage. Zhaxi and Cairin learn about types of local garbage that are on the increase such as plastic bags and bottles, disposable chopsticks and cups, expired batteries, and construction waste. This garbage negatively impacts lakes, rivers, and animals that eat it. Given the limited opportunities for disposing of garbage, the teacher suggests that the students reduce garbage production by not using disposable chopsticks and limiting purchases of bottled water and junk food. Drawings and remarks on methods of recycling and categorizing garbage are included.

Story 17: The Black Yak-hair Tent - a Mobile Home is set during a time when Laba's family annually moved between four pastures. The focus is on nomads' wise use of grassland for their livestock at appropriate times. Rotating usage of grassland protects nature as well as efficiently utilizing ecological resources.

Story 18: Lifeguarding Spirit - the Yak highlights locals' dependence on yaks for a self-sufficient livelihood. Providing transportation, milk, cheese, yogurt, meat, skin, wool, and black tent fabric, Laba encourages his children to appreciate what yaks offer, which makes their life possible on the Plateau.

In Story 19: One Night at a Museum, Zhaxi and his classmates visit the Tibetan Folk Art Museum where various traditional household items are on display, including baskets, blankets, bags for



tea made of animal skins, wooden bowls, yak hair yarn, flint, and natural materials used to paint thangka. The visit brings new appreciation of the value of these environmentally-friendly, reusable items.

The list of contributors involved in the compilation of this book suggests that much of the book was written and edited by non-Tibetan speakers, but reviewed by a Tibetan scholar from the China Tibetology Research Center. Although few children or adults in the Three Rivers Source Region can read Tibetan, many monks there do. Furthermore, in other Tibetan areas, Tibetan literacy is more common. A Tibetan-language version would be very useful and it is not clear to this reviewer why a bilingual version was not published in one volume.

In sum, *Home at The Source of Three Rivers* is a useful addition to the few readings related to conservation for primary and junior middle school students in the region. The language is appropriate for the intended audience. Illustrations with more detail would be helpful. The book would have also greater impact if it were open access and easily downloadable, and if an audio version were available in the local Tibetan dialect as well as Chinese so children could share with their younger siblings and illiterate relatives.

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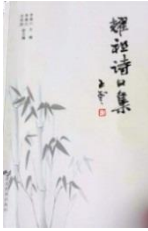
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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Ani Maqing 阿尼玛卿, a myes rma chen ཨ་མེས་རྣ་ཆེན།  
 Bayan Kala 巴颜喀拉, a chen gangs ri ཨ་ཆེན་གངས་རི།  
 Cairin 才仁, tshe ring ཆེ་རིང་།  
 Chang Tang, Qiangtang 羌塘, byang thang བྱང་ཐང་།  
 Duoji 多吉, rdo rje རྡོ་རྗེ།  
 Gaduo Juewu 朵朵觉悟, sga stod jo bo སྐ་སྣོད་ཇོ་བོ།  
 Gesar 格萨尔, ge sar གེ་སར།  
 Jiangcuo 江措, rgya mtsho རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
 Kekexili 可可西里, a chen gangs rgyab ཨ་ཆེན་གངས་རྒྱལ།  
 Kunlun 昆仑, khu nu རུ་ནུ།  
 Laba 拉巴, lhag pa ལྷག་པ།  
 Lancang 澜沧, rdza chu རྩ་ཆུ།  
 Meiduo 梅朵, me tog མེ་ཏོག།  
 Niang Jijia 娘吉加, snying lcags rgyal སྙིང་ལམ་རྒྱལ།  
 Nyangchakja, snying lcags rgyal སྙིང་ལམ་རྒྱལ།  
 Qinghai 青海, mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྔན།  
 Qumalai 曲麻菜, chu dmar leb ཆུ་དམར་ལེབ།  
 Renqing 仁青, rin chen རིན་ཆེན།  
 Suonan 索南, bsod nams བསོད་ནམས།  
 Suonan Dajie 索南达杰, bsod nams dar rgyas བསོད་ནམས་དར་རྒྱས།  
 Tang Gula 唐古拉, gdang la གང་ལ།  
 thangka, thang kha ཐང་ཀ།  
 Yangjin 央金, g.yang can གཡང་ཅན།  
 Yangtze, Changjiang 长江, 'bri chu འབྲི་ཆུ།  
 Yushu 玉树, yul shul ཡུ་ཤུ།  
 Zhaxi 扎西, bkra shis བརྒ་ཤིས།  
 Zhiduo 治多, 'bri stod འབྲི་སྣོད།

## REVIEW: YAOZU'S COLLECTED POEMS AND ESSAYS

Reviewed by Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春, Joint Surgery Department, Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital)



Li Qingchuan 李青川, Li Qingyun 李青云, and Wang Yongsheng 王永胜 (eds.). 2015. *Yaozu shiwenji* 耀祖诗文集 [*Yaozu's Collected Poems and Essays*]. Xining 西宁: Qinghai Minzu Chubanshe 青海民族出版社 [Qinghai Nationalities Press]. 180 pp, 17 photos. ISBN: 978-7-5420-2591-3 (paperback 30RMB).

I give an overview of Yaozu's life, review and comment on *Yaozu shiwenji* 'Yaozu's Collected Poems and Essays', and provide an appendix describing a visit I made to the Datong area in 2001.<sup>2</sup>

Mongghul poet and essayist, Li Yaozu (1925-2014) was born in Xialangjia Village, Duolin Town, Datong Hui and Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County.<sup>3</sup> Under the administration of Xining City, Datong is located in east central Qinghai Province.<sup>4</sup>

Li Yaozu, was from, Datong County. He was sent to a traditional private school when he was about six years old. He studied such works as *Baijiaxing* 'The Book of Family Names', *Sanzijing* 'Three-Character Canon', and *Zengguangxianwen* 'The Wisdom of

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Limusishiden. 2018. Review: *Yaozu's Collected Poems and Essays*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:247-268.

<sup>2</sup> How, when, and why Mongghul moved to today's Datong County from their original home in Huzhu County, as well as Mongghul language use and cultural practice in 2001, are described later in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> All footnotes have been added by Limusishiden, except for the footnotes referencing the direct quotations from Schram (2006 [1954-1961]). Information I added to the translations outside footnotes appear in []. For recent scholarship on the Monguor/Monggul/Mangghuer/Tu, see Roche and Stuart (2015).

<sup>4</sup> The Mongghul (Tu) population for Datong County in 2011 was 44,333, according to the county's official website (<http://bit.ly/2u9ZO9m>, accessed 29 March 2017), representing about ten percent of the county's total population. Qinghai Province's total Tu population in the year 2000 was 204,413 (<http://goo.gl/VMhIf8>, accessed 29 March 2017). Mongghul are deeply influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and speak dialects that share similarity with the Mongolian language.

*Ancient Aphorisms*' until he was fifteen. During this period, his uncle, Li Shiruo, also instructed him in calligraphy. In 1939, he was selected to study in Xiguan Liangji Primary School located in the old county seat - Chengguan Town - in the south-central part of Datong County. In 1941, he entered the State-run, Xining Shifan Xuexiao 'Xining Normal School'.

In the fall of 1944, he enlisted in the Zhongguo Zhuyinjun He Yuanzhengjun 'Chinese Expedition Army in India'. After he arrived in Chongqing, he was then sent to a low-ranking school that provided little to students, e.g., the food included rice that contained sand. Furthermore, he found the weather unbearably hot compared to his home region. He and a classmate eventually left the school and worked in the Qinghai Tongxianghui 'Association of Qinghai Fellow Provincials' in Chongqing.

One day, a man in purple clothing and his retinue came to the Association of Qinghai Fellow Provincials to investigate and to contribute funds to the association. From the dialect Li Yaozu and his classmate were speaking, the man realized that they were from Datong and asked if they were willing to attend school.

Li Yaozu and his classmate enthusiastically expressed a desire to study. Later, he learned that the man was the seventh Zhangjia Living Buddha.<sup>1</sup> The living Buddha immediately took out a name card and wrote on it. The next day, the two were told to register in Bianjiang 'Borderlands' University in Chongqing.

Li Yaozu and his classmate returned to Datong after finishing their second year of study at the university. Li Yaozu then became a school teacher in Datong County. After Liberation in 1949, he was trained and became an accountant for eight years. Soon after, he became a teacher again. In total, he taught for twenty-three years as a *minban* 'unofficial' teacher in Datong County.

Li Yaozu excelled at Chinese calligraphy and often helped fellow villagers write contracts, letters, antithetical couplets,<sup>2</sup> and so

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<sup>1</sup> Luosang beidan danbei zhongmei (Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me) (1892-1958) (Anonymous 1993:537). Birth and death dates are reported as 1891-1957 (<http://tinyurl.com/y7nctnop>, accessed 9 October 2017) and 1890-4 March 1957 (<http://tinyurl.com/ya643o9n>, accessed 9 October 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Wong (1996) writes that antithetical couplets date from the time of Du Fu

on. He was one of the few Mongghul literate in Chinese in the Upper Four Villages<sup>1</sup> in Datong Hui and Mongghul Autonomous County. Local people respectfully called him "Li Xiansheng,"<sup>2</sup> "Li Xiucui,"<sup>3</sup> and "Teacher Li."

A recognized Mongghul folksong singer, Li Yaozu was often invited to Mongghul weddings to sing dance songs, *Tangdarihgiima*,<sup>4</sup> and *Log Tuluugu Yijee*.<sup>5</sup> While he may have known such songs at one time, he was unable to speak Mongghul with me when he was hospitalized where I work in the summer of 2014. When I spoke to him in Mongghul, he answered in Chinese. He seemed to understand some simple Mongghul.

In addition, Li Yaozu sang *piyingxi* 'shadow play'<sup>6</sup> and was often invited to local villages to sing such songs during the Spring Festival. Such songs likely included *Zhang Lian Maibu* 'Zhang Lian Sells Cloth' and *Baizitu* 'A Hundred Playing Children'. At parties in his own home and in other homes, villagers, clan members, relatives, and friends often asked him to tell such stories as *Sanguoyanyi* 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms', *Xiyouji* 'Journey to the West', and *Yangjiajiang* 'Generals of the Yang Families'. People drank and enjoyed Li Yaozu's stories. As the atmosphere reached its climax, Li Yaozu switched to singing such Shaanxi opera or *xianxiao*<sup>7</sup> selections

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and Li Shangyin and is uniquely Chinese, exemplifying careful composition in regulated verse and not as part of a poem, but as independent poetic entities or, mini poems, and further that an excellent antithetical couplet marks a noteworthy occasion and can instruct and entertain while conveying a sense of cultural refinement.

<sup>1</sup> Shangsibu (Upper Four Villages/Areas) referred to today's Baoku, Qinglin, Qingshan, Xishan, and Xunrang townships, and Duolin and Chengguan towns. The Upper Four Villages/Areas is at a higher elevation (approximately 2,500~3,000 meters) than other areas in Datong County. Mongghul families typically lived on hills and mountains where they farmed and herded livestock.

<sup>2</sup> In the past, those literate in Chinese were sometimes called "*xiansheng*."

<sup>3</sup> Those literate in Chinese were often called "*xiucui*." Historically, *xiucui* were those who had passed the imperial examination at the county level.

<sup>4</sup> A famous Mongghul melody. I do not know the meaning of the title.

<sup>5</sup> A song sung by the bride-taker when the bride begins leaving her parents' home to go to her groom's home.

<sup>6</sup> A storytelling and entertainment form employing cut-out figures that are held between a source of light and a translucent screen.

<sup>7</sup> *Xianxiao* 'virtue and filial piety' is a folk singing-and-story-telling art form

as *Zhameian 'Judge Bao and the Qing Xianlian Case'*, *Yuanmenzhanzi 'General Yang Liulang Executes His Own Son'*, *Qirenbian 'Seven Worthies'*, and *Fangsinian 'Madame of Fangsi'*.

All the ninety poems in this book were written in a form of classical Chinese poetry and typified by certain traditional forms. When he visited landscapes, he depicted the scenery, mountains, and monasteries. His poetry expresses his love for relatives and friends, anguish in recalling family members who had starved to death, and reviews of some historical Chinese books, for example, *Liaozhaizhiyi 'Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio'* and *Yangguifeizhuan 'The Story of Yang Guifei'*, and such television series as *Shaoshuaichunqiu 'The Young Marshal's Life'*. Below is an example of a poem celebrating rural people living in a beautiful, bountiful landscape:<sup>1</sup>

逊让行

过逊让，上塘坊，胸襟  
自然宽敞。

青山此处独好，葱茏郁  
苍。

万顷麦浪，风拂金波荡  
漾。

大片肥沃土壤，自古脑  
山粮仓。

千百劳动儿女，胼手砥  
足，耕耘分外忙。

南来北往，笑脸相向，  
今年丰收在望。

Visiting Xunrang

Passing Xunrang and reached Tangfang,<sup>2</sup>  
(I) feel naturally broad-minded.

These blue hills here are beyond compare  
with looming lush and green.

Wind-blown waves in boundless expanses  
of rippling golden fields of wheat.

Large tracts of fertile soil here, from  
ancient times, full granaries in the home  
of hillside people.

Thousands of laborers have been busy  
working hard.

People come and go with smiling faces, a  
bumper harvest is anticipated this year.

Li Yaozu wrote this poem in the autumn of 1960 when he and his colleagues visited Xunrang Township, Datong County to

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often accompanied by the *sanxian* 'three-stringed plucked instrument' that only some literate Datong Mongghul played.

<sup>1</sup> This and other translations are by Limusishiden.

<sup>2</sup> A Mongghul village, located in today's Xunrang Township, Datong Hui and Mongghul Autonomous County.

investigate the autumn harvest. Observing the rippling wheat as they walked through the fields, he was glad there would be a bumper harvest. The poem also notes that Mongghul lived and farmed on the slopes, suggesting that poems written describing a wonderful life of smiling people with full granaries were more formulaic than realistic.

悼三弟耀宗

一九六八年冬

(一)

凭棺无语泪满腮，

老的却将小的抬。

九年连死人四口，

都是我家枢纽来。

(二)

恶病折磨整九年，

夜夜呻吟五更天。

临歿应知目未瞑，

不见阿兄在床前。

Mourning Third Younger Brother - Li Yaozong  
Winter 1968

(1)

Seeing his coffin (I) am speechless, tears  
on my cheeks,

(I), an elder (brother) will carry my younger  
(brother's) coffin.

Four people died one after another in the  
past nine years,

They were all my dearest persons.

(2)

(He) suffered from malignant disease for  
nine years,

(He) groaned every night till dawn.

His eyes remained open after death,

(I) will no longer see my younger brother.

注：1960 年生活困难  
时期，先母，先兄，先  
嫂共三人相继死亡，  
1968 年三弟病亡，至  
此共死亡四人。(p. 19-  
20)

Note: My mother, elder brother, and elder  
brother's wife died during the great famine  
of 1960. My third younger brother died from  
disease in 1968, therefore, four people  
died (19-20).

The three people dearest to him starved to death during the Sannian Kunnan Shiqi 'Three Years of Difficulty' from 1959-1961.



Furthermore, his third younger brother<sup>1</sup> died in great pain after a prolonged illness.

Of the seven essays presented, one relates to an ancestor and a historical move from Huzhu County to the Upper Four Villages/Areas in Datong County:

My ancestors originally lived in Dongchua<sup>2</sup> Langjia Village, Hongyazigou Valley. It was one of the Thirteen Tribes<sup>3</sup> in Huzhu County. The Hongyazigou Valley areas were granted to Li Tusi<sup>4</sup> during the Yuan Dynasty. Our ancestors were under the jurisdiction of the tusi, and our surname Li was derived from Li Tusi.

The old *Datong Xianzhi* 'Datong County Annals'<sup>5</sup> recorded "only Mongghul in Datong County have no tusi." The *Tuzu Jianshi* 'Brief History of the Tu Nationality'<sup>6</sup> recorded "today's Mongghul in Datong moved there from Huzhu." My father once said, "Our ancestors were Tatars from northeastern China" and "we moved here from Hongyazigou Valley, Eastern Plain." This suggests the Tu Nationality are Xianbei<sup>7</sup> descendants and that they moved here from Huzhu. Historically, there were slight differences between the Hexi (West of River) Mongghul Region including Xunrang, Qinglin, and Jile<sup>8</sup> townships, Duolin and Chengguan towns, and the Beishan (Northern Mountains) Mongghul Region including Xishan, Baoku, and Qingshan townships in the Upper Four Villages/Areas in

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<sup>1</sup> The poet had three siblings. His parents had three sons and one daughter. He was the second.

<sup>2</sup> "Eastern Plain," refers to contemporary Huzhu County.

<sup>3</sup> The thirteen tribes in the Huzhu Mongghul area were Huarin (Hualin), Langjia, Foori, Zhuashidi (Baizhuazi), Juucha (Juecha), Shdara (Dala), Aja, Zancha, Darima, Lanja (Lanjia), Liandi (Liande), Wangqi, and Jisang. The tribes' headmen visited Tibet seeking support to build a monastery in the Mongghul area. This is today's Rgulang (T. Dgon lung byams pa gling (C. Youningsi), a Dge lugs monastery located in Sitan Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County, Qinghai Province. There were 197 monks in 1990 (Nian and Bai 1993:122-126), Pu (2013:71-75) reports 396 monks in 1957, and Smith (2013:291) reports over 300 monks.

<sup>4</sup> Native chief.

<sup>5</sup> No dates are given in the book.

<sup>6</sup> No dates are given in the book.

<sup>7</sup> An ancient group that resided in today's eastern Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, and northeast China.

<sup>8</sup> Where there were two Mongghul villages in 2017.

Datong. Mongghul in the Hexi Region used their original village names when they moved from Huzhu during the Jiaqing period [1796-1820] of the Qing Dynasty [1636-1912], for example, Langjia,<sup>1</sup> Marizang,<sup>2</sup> Songbu,<sup>3</sup> Basheng<sup>4</sup> (Bahong is locally pronounced Basheng), Tuhun<sup>5</sup> (Tughuan, locally pronounced Tuhun), Wushigou,<sup>6</sup> Wushizhuang,<sup>7</sup> Heerjiang<sup>8</sup> (later, because Mongghul and Hui lived together, Liu Yunxin, a county head renamed "Heerjiang," "Hezhong," with the latter meaning "work together with one heart"). They spoke Mongghul and sang Mongghul songs. Women braided their hair and wore the braids on their back and tied it with red cotton strings, which was known as the "Huari Headdress." They performed cremation and had no genealogy book. Their customs are similar to Huzhu Mongghul.

Mongghul in the Beishan Region rarely spoke Mongghul. Women's braids were put in *xjalang*<sup>9</sup> in front of their chest. The names of their farming land were mostly in Mongol. At the fall of the Ming Dynasty within the *yamen* territory in Datong, Mongols in the Qinghai Lake area, probably the Buerhai, Mailigen, and Handun Mongols, were settled and grazed livestock. During the early Qing Dynasty, Mongols of Gushi Khan moved into Tibet and Qinghai from the present Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which forced a number of Mongols in the Qinghai Lake area to move away; the remaining small number of tribes gradually married and lived with Mongghul people and finally became the Tu Nationality. Most Mongghul who live today in Baoku, Qingshan, and Xishan townships mostly say they are Mongol descendants.

Mongghul in Datong are also mixed with Han Chinese, Tibetan, and others. When Mongghul migrated to Datong, they farmed and

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<sup>1</sup> Langjia Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County.

<sup>2</sup> Baimasi Village, Hongyazigou Township, Huzhu County.

<sup>3</sup> Songbu Village, Halazhigou Township, Huzhu County.

<sup>4</sup> Bahong Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County.

<sup>5</sup> Tughuan Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County.

<sup>6</sup> Wuxi (Wushi) Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County.

<sup>7</sup> Wuxi Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County.

<sup>8</sup> Foorijang (Huoerjun) Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County.

<sup>9</sup> *Xjalang* (oral Amdo Tibetan: *skya long*; Literary Tibetan, *skra long*). The top end of the *xjalang* was called *biantongzi* (literally, braid-tube-is) in local Chinese. Small braids were put into a cloth tube and tied with several cloth buttons that were sewn on the cloth tube to affix a *xjalang* that hung in front of a woman's chest and legs.

herded livestock. People living in tents were still seen during the mid-Qing Dynasty. When I was young, I saw some families with a skinned horse-head hanging on a pole on a wooden chest filled with wheat flour in their houses. It was clear evidence of the historical animal husbandry that they had practiced. As society developed, more and more land was cultivated, propelling a shift from animal husbandry to agriculture, or animal husbandry and agriculture were mixed together (104-106).

The above material contributes information about the Datong Mongghul rarely seen in domestic and international publications, especially as compared to what has been published about the Huzhu and Minhe Tu. As to how, when, and why Mongghul migrated to Datong, Louis Schram (2006 [1954-1961]:130-131) has information relevant to the Datong Mongghul, which I present below:

...in order to understand the scattering of the Monguors, however, exclusive emphasis should not be put on the factor of frontier inroads and revolts. The economic factor was also important, especially the development of agriculture and the opening to cultivation of extensive valleys, notably between 1644 and 1723, when there was relatively little frontier warfare. Indeed, after frontier disturbances a population that has fled usually comes back to its original homeland, but when the people disperse and spread in order to engage in new, profitable occupations, they settle and do not return.

...

The establishment of the new sub-prefecture of Tat'ung [Datong], dependent on Hsining [Xining], was also a phase of this great economic transformation. After the general revolt of the Mongols of Kukunor [Qinghai Hu 'Qinghai Lake'], the frontier Tibetans, and the lamas of the whole region had been crushed in 1723-24, the military district (*wei*) of Tat'ung, forty miles north of Hsining, was recognized as a sub-prefecture in 1761. Chinese and Muslims, in addition to Monguors, joined in the land-rush to cultivate these grasslands, because attractive terms had been offered for payment for the land after three years, with loans for seed and the use of oxen.<sup>1</sup> The population of Tat'ung climbed from 5,862

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<sup>1</sup> *Tung Hua Lu* ("records" of the Manchu Dynasty), Yung Cheng period

inhabitants in 1723-35 to 11,830 between 1736-96 (*Annals of Hsining*, ch. 16, pp. 16a-b) and a number of new villages were established.

Among these villages four were entirely inhabited by Monguors; three were equally divided between Monguors and Chinese, and in two the Monguors numbered 30 per cent of the population (*Annals of Hsining*, ch. 12, pp. 15a-b). After 1796 another four villages were built for Monguors by the Living Buddha Sumpa of the monastery of Erhkulung [Dgon lung byams pa gling]. All the Monguors who migrated to Tat'ung in this period were subjects of the sixteen T'u-ssu [tusi] settled in the region of Hsining.

Contemporary with the expansion of agriculture into the Tat'ung sub-prefecture was the opening of the splendid large plain of Weiyuanp'u [Weiyuan], northeast of Hsining. Here again there was a land-rush, including the subjects of various T'u-ssu, who settled in scattered groups all over the plain.

In 1644 the population of the Kueite [Guide] region numbered 2,060; in 1746, it numbered 11,560. A previous attempt had been made in 1380, early in the Ming dynasty, to use Mongols from around Hochou [Huzhu] to colonize this region. I have often met, in Hsining, Monguors from Kueite, visiting their relatives in their old country. They told me that more than 300 Monguor families of Hsining origin were living around Kueite, scattered among Tibetans and Chinese. Their tradition was that their ancestors had left Hsining in order to make a better living.

Though Schram referenced the *Annals of Hsining* based on his own observations of Mongghul through visits to their original home in today's Huzhu area, the evidence I (Limusishiden) have seen suggests much of what has been mentioned earlier in this paper, i.e., that the ancestors of the Mongghul in the Datong area moved there at various times in the Qing Dynasty, particularly after the revolts of the Mongol generals in 1723 and that a main reason for their migration was a search for better living conditions through herding and agriculture. The power of religious leaders is also important, e.g., four villages were built by the Living Buddha Sumpa of Rgulang Monastery.

Li briefly presents his family tree:

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(1723-1735), ch 4, p 39.

My first ancestors (their names are unknown<sup>1</sup>) originally migrated to Datong from Langjia Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County (in older times, it was known as Dongchuan 'Eastern Plain' during the Jiaqing period [1796-1820] of the Qing Dynasty. They initially settled in Mijia Valley. Later, the couple had three sons and lived separately by building individual courtyards when they were adults. The eldest son later moved to Dazhuang Village in Xialangjia. Afterwards, the eldest son had three wives. My father's father's father was the son of the second wife. His family developed for ten generations with about one hundred households and over 400 people during the last nearly 300 years.<sup>2</sup> They lived by farming, learned Chinese cultural knowledge, and many great talents appeared successively (106).

This suggests Datong Mongghul received Chinese education more often than in Huzhu. Mongghul moved to Datong, and lived with Chinese, and were thus powerfully influenced by Chinese culture. This also explains why Mongghul language and culture were lost earlier and more quickly as compared to Huzhu.

After Mongghul settled in the Upper Four Villages/Areas, they met and then planned to build a new monastery<sup>3</sup> for themselves. They then sent representatives to Tibet for support as Yaozu describes below:

At that time, there was a man named Aluo in Wushi Village. He organized some old Mongghul men and went to Tibet where they invited the Jiase Living Buddha to come to their home area to construct a monastery. On the pretext of the soil in the east being polluted, the Living Buddha did not come, but gave his clothes and hat to Aluo and others to be enshrined and worshipped.

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<sup>1</sup> His clan members viewed a contract recording his first ancestor who separated from his two brothers after a division of family property during the Jiaqing reign.

<sup>2</sup> More accurately: 200 years up to 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Xueguoer (T. Dgon gsar bshad sgrub gling. C. Ping'ansi) a Dge lug monastery located in Ping'ansi Village, Duolin Township, Datong Hui and Mongghul (Tu) Autonomous County, Xining City, Qinghai Province. It had thirty-five monks in 1958 (Pu 2013:7).

The Living Buddha's clothes and hat were brought, and then all the elder Mongghul men gathered for discussion. A location for building a monastery was selected on Xida Hill after divination. Soon after, a scripture hall, a Living Buddha compound, and some monk quarters were built with local people contributing funds, construction materials, and labor. It was named Xueguoer Monastery at the beginning because the hill where the monastery resembled an eagle. It is a subordinate monastery under Rgulang Monastery's jurisdiction. It was the Rgulang Monastery Astronomy Institute. Immediately, they asked local families to send their boys to be monks if they had several sons. They also invited some high-ranking monks to teach these monks Tibetan Buddhism.

The monastery was burned in a rebellion during the Tongzhi reign [1862-1875]. Later, it was rebuilt. To wish the monastery external security, it was renamed Ping'an 'Peaceful' Monastery.

In line with the Pochumixin 'Abolishing Superstition' Policy, the monastery was destroyed again in 1958.

For centuries, Mongghul of the Upper Four Villages/Areas regarded the monastery as their inner sustenance. They chanted Buddhist scriptures to prevent calamities and prayed for safety and bumper harvests in the Hall and during festivals. Once drought came, groups even came from west of Chengguan Town. They thrust willow twigs into their collars at the back of their necks and went to the "Longwanggong Dragon King Palace"<sup>1</sup> located on the hill behind the monastery where they kowtowed and pleaded for rain. It seemed very efficacious (94-95).

...

Today, although the monastery has not been rebuilt, elders and youths alike still visit the monastery ruins to burn incense and make prostrations. When drought strikes, locals come to plead for rain. Incense is lit and smoke drifts in the air at the old monastery location, circled by green trees and decorated with sacred cloth ribbons. Locals still practice Buddhism as they used to (94-95).

Prefaces are given by Bao Yizhi (b. 1951), a Mangghuer native of Baojia Village, Guanting Town, Minhe Hui and Tu Autonomous

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<sup>1</sup> It was unclear why the Xueguoer (C. Ping'ansi) Monastery later was called the Longwanggong 'Dragon King Palace'.

County; Ma Zhiwei, Chairman, the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the Qinghai Provincial Party Committee; and Xie Zuo, a former vice-school head of the Qinghai Provincial Party Committee School. The poet also provided a preface.

The latter part of the book features thirteen recollections and memorials by Li Qingchuan (chief editor and the poet's second son), Li Qingyun (the poet's third son), Wang Yongsheng (associate managing editor, the poet's son-in-law), his oldest son, daughters, and grandchildren.

The Mongghul poet Li Yaozu experienced many years of frustrating challenges. He passed away in the ninth decade of his life in 2014. His contributions to the study of Mongghul culture, origins, and religion in the "Upper Four Villages/Areas," the background of Ping'an Monastery as well as Mongghul customs in the Upper Four Villages/Areas are valuable, especially to contemporary Datong Mongghul, students of Qinghai local history, and those interested in the Monguor.

## APPENDIX

I became interested in Mongghul culture study beginning in about 1989. As time passed, I grew curious about the Datong Mongghul: How many speak Mongghul in Datong and what is the situation of Mongghul culture today? To answer these questions, I present a report that I wrote after I and my Mongghul wife, Jugui (b. 1969), visited Mongghul villages in Datong Hui and Mongghul Autonomous County in January 2001.

We visited two Mongghul villages in Datong on Spring Festival Eve, 23 January 2001.<sup>1</sup> We arrived in Songbu Village, Xunrang Township on the afternoon of the twenty-third. Thanks to a friend's introduction, we were taken to an elder's home and learned that he was one of only three people who spoke Mongghul among the 300 households in the village. About eighty-five households were classified as Tu. The remainder were Han and Hui. The old man was very happy to see us because we were Mongghul from Huzhu.

We were asked to sit on the important seat on the *bankang*.<sup>2</sup> I was eager to know what dialect he spoke. I greeted the old man in Mongghul, and he answered in Mongghul. I realized that he was nervous when I continued to speak in Mongghul. He seemed only to understand if I spoke to him slowly using simple sentences. He did not understand when I spoke quickly.

There were five people in his home - the old man and his wife, his son and daughter-in-law, and one grandchild. His Mongghul name was Ganzang. His Mongghul wife did not speak Mongghul. When he was nine years old, he had been adopted by a family in Songbu Village, from Bali Mongghul Village, about five kilometers away. He recalled that, as a child, his whole family in Bali Village spoke Mongghul. His grandmother did not speak Chinese at that time and everyone wore Mongghul clothes. When he arrived in Songbu Village, he did not often speak Mongghul because only some elders spoke Mongghul. He then

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2v579nU> and <http://bit.ly/2ht1ULE> (accessed 3 August 2017) for videos of these visits.

<sup>2</sup> A heatable adobe platform. For a more detailed description, see Limusishiden and Jugui (2010:38).



spoke Mongghul only when he returned to his biological parent's village, because everyone in the village spoke it. He said he had not spoken Mongghul in more than fifty years.

In 2001, only Ganzang and two very old women spoke Mongghul in the village, however, they rarely met and talked together. Young people asked curiously what they said if they were observed conversing in Mongghul. These elders said they had forgotten a lot of vocabulary, which made it difficult and awkward to communicate with each other in Mongghul.

Ganzang felt very sorry that the Mongghul language had nearly disappeared in the village and that local youths would never speak their language. He admired Huzhu Mongghul for still speaking Mongghul. He knew nothing about the Tu in Minhe and Tongren counties.

He said that about forty years earlier, there were weddings between Datong and Huzhu Mongghul. At least two days were required to escort a bride to her groom's home when she moved to Huzhu. They reached the groom's home on the first day, stayed overnight, and returned the next day.

Many elders had been to Rgulang Monastery to worship. However, Mongghul generally had stopped going there, having little attachment to their ancestral monastery.

Ganzang thought his family moved to Datong to make a living by cultivating fields during his grandfather's generation. He was sure the Mongghul in his village originally came from Huzhu, but he did not know where in Huzhu. During the annual Qingming Festival,<sup>1</sup> they first kowtowed in the direction of Huzhu before kowtowing to their own graves in order to commemorate their ancestors and original homeland.

That night, a man<sup>2</sup> (b. ~1958) was invited to Ganzang's home to join the party and chat with us because he knew some Mongghul songs. He was unable to speak Mongghul. He and Ganzang had been locally well-known singers at weddings and drinking parties in local

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<sup>1</sup> Qingming (Tomb-Sweeping Day), is a festival observed on the first day of the fifth solar term of the Chinese lunar calendar.

<sup>2</sup> I did not learn his name.

Mongghul communities. Such singers created a joyous atmosphere by singing traditional Mongghul songs. At that time, Ganzang and the man were the only wedding singers in the local area.

The two sang five songs for us that night. Three songs were drinking songs sung in Tibetan, and the other two were wedding songs. All the songs were incomplete and they did not know what the drinking songs meant. They showed great pride while performing these songs. The melodies were similar to what we were familiar with in Huzhu, though the content was a bit different. They explained the meaning of the two wedding songs to us in Chinese.

The next day was the first day of the first lunar month. We were taken to Tuhun Village. I believe this is the only village where Mongghul was still spoken in 2001 in Datong County. We walked across a mountain and reached the village an hour later. Following Ganzang's previous instructions, we easily found the household we wanted to visit. The village name is similar to my natal village's name - Tughuan in Huzhu (Tughuan was locally pronounced "Tuhun"). We learned that our ancestors had both originated from Tughuan Village, Wushi Town, Huzhu County

We were very warmly welcomed. There were eight family members in the household. The older son had taken his wife and children to the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region seeking a better life several years earlier. That year, the older son had come to visit his father while his wife and children stayed in Xinjiang. The old man of the house was called Mazi Aadee (Mazi Yeye) "Pockmarked Grandfather" (1934-2003) locally because he had suffered from smallpox as a child.

Mazi Aadee had a good reputation in his village, consequently, three elder men from his village came to pay a New Year visit, bringing bread as gifts. They were soon drinking and chatting. They were delighted to see us and willingly answered questions that we asked in Mongghul. Luckily, the three visitors and Pockmarked Old Man were the four villagers who were considered to be the most fluent Mongghul speakers. We were able to easily communicate in Mongghul. We talked about various topics related to Mongghul, comparing Datong and Huzhu, in terms of Mongghul dialects.

About two hours later, Mazi Aadee's son asked us to come outside to watch their village dance team's performance. It was performed on a big threshing ground at the village center. About fifty dancers from the village performed a program that resembled a Chinese *shehuo*<sup>1</sup> held in Han villages in my home area of Huzhu. A Mongghul feature was two or three men wearing fur-lined jackets who sang two different Mongghul songs. Another Mongghul feature was seven Mongghul women dressed in Mongghul black felt hats, long blue robes, and wearing unembroidered sashes, who performed a circle dance similar to *anzhog*<sup>2</sup> dancing in Huzhu. The song accompanying the circle dance was similar to what I had heard in Huzhu in Tibetan. Only one song accompanied the dance performance. It was repeated over and over. The women's Mongghul clothes seemed newly sewn and may have been prepared by the administrative village leadership.

Mazi Aadee's son introduced me to the villagers over a loudspeaker. I was asked to give a speech in Mongghul, which I did. Hopefully, a few old people understood. Mazi Aadee and the other three elder Mongghul speakers did not come to the performance. During the program, I tried to chat with some people in Mongghul. Several people over fifty could make some conversation with me, but not easily.

When the program ended at dusk, we returned to Mazii Aadee's home and continued our conversation in Mongghul. The four old men continued drinking liquor and singing until late at night.

They agreed that their ancestors were from Huzhu but were unsure where in Huzhu. They called themselves "Ndani Kun" 'our people' and "Karilang."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Shehuo* refers to dancing and singing performances traditionally held during the Chinese Lunar New Year Period.

<sup>2</sup> *Anzhog* is a circle dance, common in Mongghul areas, that is held at a home around the small courtyard plot or in front of the household gate. It is also performed in lanes and on threshing grounds in winter during the New Year period. Generally, one or two men lead the singing and dancing, followed by mostly women. The dancers bend over while their arms swing left and right twice, then turn while their arms are stretched in the air. Folksongs accompany the dance (Limusishiden and Jugui 2010:210).

<sup>3</sup> Mongghul in the Huzhu area were historically divided into Haliqi (meaning unknown) and Fulaan Nara (Red Sun). Haliqi includes the present Danma, Donggou, Weiyuan, Taizi, and Dongshan townships. Fulaan Nara refers to

Only a few villages in this Datong region engaged in religious practice, particularly *purghan*.<sup>1</sup> Generally, only old people consulted it when they met misfortune. Many young people could no longer identify *purghan* and what function they performed.

I surmised that among the total 44,333 (2011) Mongghul in Datong County, only ten to twenty were fluent Mongghul speakers. Since my visit, the years have passed and some of those old Mongghul speakers have passed away.

Historically, certain Huzhu Mongghul referred to Datong Mongghul as "Serihguang"<sup>2</sup> Mongghul. They did not know the term "Upper Four Villages/Areas." Limusishiden's father and grandfather had no idea that Mongghul in Datong had moved there from the Huzhu side in the past.

After graduating from Qinghai University Affiliated Medical College in 1993, I have met many Mongghul from the Upper Four Villages/Areas in Datong County who came to my hospital to seek medical treatment. Unfortunately, I never met anyone who could speak more than a few kinship terms in Mongghul.

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Wushi, Sunduo, and Hongyazigou townships, and Shdara Township in Ledu Region. Fulaan Nara is located northeast of the Dongyuan Mountains. Haliqi is southwest of the same mountains. Fulaan Nara residents refer to themselves as "Karilang." Haliqi residents call themselves "Mongghul" (Limusishiden and Jugui 2010:42).

<sup>1</sup> The *purghan* (or *pram*) is a deity represented as a sedaned image, cloth-covered pole, or a spear. For more detail, see Limusishiden and Jugui (2010:23).

<sup>2</sup> Serihguang (T. Btsan po dgon dga' ldan dam chos gling; C. Guanghuisi) is a Dge lugs monastery located in Yamenzhuang Village, Dongxia Town, Datong Hui and Mongghul Autonomous County, Xining City, Qinghai Province. There were twenty-seven monks in 1981 (Pu 2013:4-6). Smith (2013:315) reports thirty monks.

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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Aja 阿嘉

Aluo 阿洛

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

Baijiaxing 百家姓

Baimasi 白马寺

Baizhuazi 白瓜子

Bali 巴里

*bankang* 板炕

Bao Yizhi 鲍义志

Baojia 鲍家

Baoku 宝库

Beishan 北山

Bahong 巴洪

*Baizitu* 百子图

Basheng 巴胜

*bianjiang* 边疆

btsan po dgon dga' ldan dam chos gling བཅན་པོ་དགོན་དགའ་ལྷན་དམ་ཆོས་གླིང་།

Buerhai 卜儿孩

Chengguan 城关

Chongqing 重庆

Dala 达拉

Danma 丹麻

Datong, Tat'ung 大通

Datong Xianzhi 大通县志

Dazhuang 大庄

dge lugs དགེ་ལུགས།

dgon gsar bshad sgrub gling དགོན་གསར་བཤད་སྒྲུབ་གླིང་།

dgon lung byams pa gling དགོན་ལུང་བྱམས་པ་གླིང་།

Dongchuan 东川

Dongxia 东峡

Du Fu 杜甫

Duolin 多林

Fangsiniang 方四娘

Guanting 官亭

Guanghuisi 广惠寺

Gushi Khan, Gushi Han 固始汗

Halazhigou 哈拉直沟

Han 汉

Handun 憨顿

Heerjiang 合尔江

Hexi 河西

Hezhong 和衷

Hezhou 河州

Hongyazigou 红崖子沟

Hualin 桦林

Huari 桦日

Hui 回

Huoer 霍尔

Huoerjun 霍尔郡

Huzhu 互助

Jiaqing nianjian 嘉庆年间

Jiase 嘉色, rgyal sras རྒྱལ་སྐྱེད་

Jile 极乐

Jisang 吉桑

Juecha 觉察

Lanjia 兰家

Langjia 浪加

Li Dechun 李得春

Liande 连德

Liangzhou 凉州

Liaozhaizhiyi 聊斋志异

Li Qingchuan 李青川

Li Qingyun 李青云

Li Shangyin 李商隐

Li Shiruo 李时若

Li Tusi 李土司

Li Yaozong 李耀宗

Li Yaozu 李耀祖

Liu Yunxin 刘运新

Longwanggong 龙王宫

Luosang beidan danbei zhongmei 罗桑贝丹丹贝仲美

Ma Zhiwei 马志伟

Mailigen 麦力根  
 Marizang 麻日藏  
 Mazi Yeye 麻子爷爷  
 Mijia 米家  
*minban* 民办  
 Minhe 民和  
 Ming 明  
 Ping'an 平安  
 Ping'ansi 平安寺  
*piyingxi* 皮影戏  
*pochumixin* 破除迷信  
 Pu Wencheng 蒲文成  
 Qing 清  
 Qinghai 青海  
 Qinghai Hu 青海湖  
 Qinghai tongxianghui 青海同乡会  
 Qinglin 青林  
 Qingming 清明  
 Qingshan 青山  
 Qirenxian 七人贤  
 Sanguoyanyi 三国演义  
 Sannian Kunnan Shiqi 三年困难时期  
*sanxian* 三弦  
 Sanzijing 三字经  
 Shaanxi 陕西  
 Shangsibu 上四堡  
 Shaoshuaichunqiu 少帅春秋  
*shehuo* 社火  
 Sitan 寺滩  
 skra long ལྷ་ལོང་།  
 skya long ལྷ་ལོང་།  
 Songbu 松布  
 Sumpa, sum pa ལུམ་པ།  
 Tangfang 塘坊  
 Tongzhi nianjian 同治年间  
 Tuguan 土官  
 Tuhun 托红



Tu 土

*tusi* 土司

Tuzu Jianshi 土族简史

Wang Yongsheng 王永胜

Wangqi 王其

Weiyuan 威远

Wushi 五十

Wushigou 吴什沟

Wushizhuang 吴什庄

Xialangjia 下浪加

Xianbei 鲜卑

*xiansheng* 先生

Xida 西大

Xie Zuo 谢佐

Xiguan Liangji 西关两级

Xining 西宁

Xining Shifan Xuexiao 西宁师范学校

Xinjiang 新疆

Xishan 西山

*xiuca* 秀才

*Xiyouji* 西游记

Xueguoer 雪果儿

Xunrang 逊让

Yamenzhuang 衙门庄

*Yangguifeizhuan* 杨贵妃传

*Yangjiajiang* 杨家将

Yaozu shiwenji 耀祖诗文集

*yikang, shaokang* 烧炕

Youningsi 佑宁寺

*Yuanmenzhanzi* 辕门斩子

Zancha 赞察

Zhameian 铡美案

Zhang Lian Maibu 张连卖布

Zhangjia 章嘉

Zengguangxianwen 增广贤文

Zhongguo Zhuyinjun He Yuanzhengjun 中国驻印军和远征军

Kelsang Norbu (Skal bzang nor bu སྐལ་བཟང་ནོར་བུ  
Gesang Nuobu 格桑诺布)



Stag 'bum rgyal སྐལ་བཟང་རྒྱལ་. 2012. *Rgud རྒྱུད* [*Degeneration*]. Zi ling ཟི་ལིང་ [Xining 西宁]: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang མཚོ་སྔོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྱུར་ཁང་ [Qinghai Nationalities Press].

## INTRODUCTION

Stag 'bum rgyal (b.1966) has authored an impressive number of literary works. After graduating from Mtsho lho mi rigs dge thon slob grwa 'Mtsho lho Prefecture Junior Teacher's Institute for Nationalities' in 1986, he began teaching in the same year in his home area of Sum mdo (Senduo), Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. From 1988 to 1990, he studied at the Northwest Institute for Nationalities in Lanzhou City. Afterwards, he returned to his home region and became a Tibetan language teacher at Mangra County Nationalities Middle School. Since 1987, he has published more than seventy short stories and novels in various Tibetan language magazines.

Stag 'bum rgyal's first novel, *Lhing 'jags kyi rtswa thang 'The Silent Grassland'* was published by Mtsho sngon Nationalities Press in 1999. It had been previously published in several installments by the literary magazine *Sbrang char 'Light Rain'* under the title *Rnam shes 'Consciousness'*. Considered the first Tibetan novel by a writer from Mtsho sngon Province, it was honored in the Second *Light Rain* Literary Awards.

He has won several awards for his short stories and novels, including the annual award by Renmin Wenxue 'People's Literature' for his story *Mi tshe'i glu dbyang 'Lifetime Song'* in 2011 and the Junmajiang 'Junma Award', the most prestigious literature award for ethnic minorities in China, for the novel *Kha ba med pa'i dgun kha*

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Kelsang Norbu. 2018. REVIEW: *Degeneration*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:269-287.

'*The Winter Without Snow*' in 2016. His most recent publication, *Bgres po dang nor khyu 'The Old Man and His Yak Herd'*, a collection of short stories, was published in 2016. His novel *Degeneration* won the fourth Sbrang char Literature Award and the fifth Prize for Literary and Artistic Creation in Mtsho sngon.<sup>1</sup>

Nineteen of the author's short stories have been translated into Chinese and are available in Debenjia (2012) and Wanma Caidan (2016).<sup>2</sup> Zhaba (Bkra bha), a writer himself and Stag 'bum rgyal's longtime friend and former classmate, writes:

"Who is Debenjia (Stag 'bum rgyal)? What are people's comments about him? In the eyes of childish students, he is a good-mannered Tibetan language teacher...; in the eyes of ordinary people, Debenjia is a drinker, an excessive smoker...; in the eyes of women, his wife married a man who is actually married to literature; in my eyes and those of other pen friends, Debenjia is a leading writer in his native language (Wanma Caidan, 2012:297).

Zhaba goes on to express regret that Stag 'bum rgyal has written materials that were lost, e.g., a well-written manuscript in a magical-realist style was lost during the time his friends were reading it, and the half-completed manuscript of yet another novel was eaten by a cow that wandered into the writer's house while he was outside drinking (Wanma Caidan, 2012:300). In the end, Zhaba hopes Stag 'bum rgyal will drink less, eat more, and live well so that his creations will become an important part of contemporary Tibetan literature (Wanma Caidan, 2012:304).

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<sup>1</sup> *Degeneration* won the Sbrang char Literature Award the fourth time it was given and the Prize for Literary and Artistic Creation the fifth time it was awarded.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the same stories appear in both volumes.

Stag 'bum rgyal's prolific writings have attracted commentary. Most of his over seventy published writings are short stories and novellas. His short stories, particularly the "dog series," have been well received by readers and have been the subject of a number of reviews. 'Brong bu rdo rje rin chen (2016), Bsod nams rgyal (2006), and Khyung thar rgyal (2016) have focused on the writer's "dog" short stories. A bu (2015) has also contributed some paragraphs related to the same topic. In contrast, the writer's two novels, *Lhing 'jags kyi rtswa thang* 'The Silent Grassland' and *Rgud 'Degeneration* have drawn less attention.

Lhag pa chos 'phel et al. (2017) give a detailed introduction to the author's first novel *Lhing 'jags kyi rtswa thang* (172-181), and Robin (2009-2010) and Hartley and Schiaffini-Vedani (2008) briefly introduce Stag 'bum rgyal. Robin comments:

Social realism, favored by writers based in the Tibet Autonomous Region, as we have seen, is also practiced by some Amdo writers and includes early works like *The Serene Meadow* [*The Silent Grassland*] (*Lhing 'jags kyi rtswa thang*, 1999) by Takbum Gyel (Stag 'bum rgyal, b.1966), the second longest Tibetan novel with 588 pages (print run 1500). It chronicles the conflict between modernity and tradition in the Tibetan grasslands through the story of a herders' family. The most recently published novel belongs to this genre, although it verges on the fantastic due to its intricate structure (35).

Ban de mkhar (2014) has edited a collection of reviews (ten in Tibetan and nine in Chinese) devoted to Stag 'bum rgyal's writings that are the products of a seminar centered on the writer's oeuvre at the Central University for Nationalities in Beijing in October 2012. Also included is a small reference to *Degeneration* in which Ljags rdor rgyal (2014) remarks:

Although *Degeneration* is not a historical novel by category, it chooses events set in the past and has certain characteristics of a historical novel; therefore, the author has failed to write a story based on one main character as modern novels usually do (15).

Dgon bkra shis don grub's (2015) Master's thesis is exclusively devoted to Stag 'bum rgyal's novels. The author writes that Stag 'bum rgyal generally concentrates on ugly social phenomena and a yearning for a better society and improved human behavior, but fails to create vivid characters (168-169). As with most other reviewers, only scattered comments are found on *Degeneration*.

Dpal ldan rgya mtsho et al. (2013) provide the only review I found exclusively devoted to *Degeneration*. It consists of conversations between five teachers and students from Kan su'u mi rigs dge thon slob gling 'Gansu Nationalities Teacher's Institute' in Gtso (Hezuo) City. Each discusses the novel from a specific aspect such as structure, the factors explaining degeneration, gender relationships, servility, and so on. For instance:

In philosophy, the rise and fall of anything has external and internal factors, and they are inter-connected. Today's topic-(the novel) *Degeneration* - has the same feature. The story reveals the historical wounds of degeneration due to a lack of harmony caused by external and internal factors. Although the story is novel-length, it has a clear order and tight structure and, therefore, the external and internal factors are clearly presented and compiled, including internal conflict between the tribal chief and his wife reflecting the external conflicts between the three tribes; and along with the conflicts of the three tribes, another conflict with Warlord Ma's forces, an alien, totally foreign culture and tradition. The story's conflicts reach a climax following such tortuous story lines (180).

## CHARACTERS

The novel recounts relationships between three Tibetan tribes sharing one ancestor namely, the Spyang tsha, Gser tsha, and Gling tsha tribes, and members of Ma's military. The characters in the figure below appear in the novel:

FIG 1. Characters in *Degeneration*.

Tribe/ Organization	Name	Detail
Spyang tsha Tribe	Nyi bzang	Chief
	Bkra mtsho	Chief's wife, sister of the Gser tsha Tribe chief
	G.yu rtse	Nyi bzang's son
	Chos dbyangs	Spyang tsha Monastery incarnate <i>bla ma</i>
	Sna dmar 'Red Nose'	Chief's family manager
	Tshe lo	Servant, A ma Dbang mo's son (Nyi bzang's secret son)
	A ma dbang mo	Servant, Tshe lo's mother
	Kun skyid	Servant, Tshe lo's wife
	Rin chen	Servant, bandit
	Nor 'bum	Servant, bandit, Rin chen's partner
Gser tsha Tribe	Lha seng	Chief
	Snying bha	Chief's elder son
	Ban te byams	Chief's younger son
	Gser tsha lama	Incarnate <i>blama</i> at Gser tsha Monastery
	Lha mo sgrol ma	From Gling tsha, married to a Gser tsha tribesman, later becomes Rin chen's wife
Gling tsha Tribe	Tshe dpal rgyal	Chief
Warlord Ma	Khe pa Ma ne	Muslin "merchant", Ma's agent
	M+'a yus po	Head of troops dispatched to the pasturelands by Chairman Ma in Zi ling (Xining)

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The story is set during Ma Bufang's (1903-1975) rule of Mtsho sngon Province during the Republic of China (1912-1949). This notorious Muslim warlord brutally ruled Mtsho sngon Province for about forty years and caused much pain and fear among local people, particularly Tibetan Buddhists (Chen 1986: 202-234).

The novel gives an account of Ma holding the reincarnation of Gser tsha Bla ma hostage in order to extort large sums of silver from the Gser tsha Tribe, echoing Ma's actions with regard to the fourteenth Dalai Lama as reported by Chen (2007:84-85) and Goldstein (1989:314-24).

## STORYLINE

The story starts with Sku lha g.yag rgyal sending his three sons to different places one auspicious day. They are told to return with what they find. The oldest son brings back a golden bell, the second one returns with a bamboo flute, and the youngest one has a she-wolf's tail. The father delightedly announces that they will become the heads of the Gser tsha Tsang, Gling tsha Tsang, and Spyang tsha Tsang<sup>1</sup> tribes, and further interprets their findings very positively. The golden bell signifies that Gser tsha Tsang will become the birthplace of the great *Bla ma*, the bamboo flute portends Gling tsha Tsang will enjoy an impressive reputation, and the wolf tail foretells Spyang tsha Tsang will flourish and be invincible. The father tells his sons to maintain a good relationship, support each other, fight enemies together, and avoid infighting. The proverb *lug pho gnyis kyis gdog gtugs na, mgo khrag a ce wa mos ldag* "when two rams butt heads, the fox enjoys the blood from their heads" foreshadows what will happen later.

The real story starts many years afterwards. While Bkra mtsho enjoys a leisurely life at home, Nyi bzang (her husband and the Spyang

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<sup>1</sup> *Gser*, *Gling*, and *Spyang* respectively mean 'gold', 'flute', and 'wolf'. *Tsa* translates as 'nephew' or 'future generation', and *tsang* means 'family' or 'tribe'.

tsha tribal chief) and their son, G.yu rtse, return from pilgrimage to Sku 'bum (Ta'er). With them is the Muslin "merchant," Khe pa Ma ne 'Merchant Ma ne'. He is sent by the warlord Ma Bufang to be a "guest" of the Spyang tsha Tribe. In fact, Nyi bzang's true reason for visiting Zi ling was to purchase arms from Ma Bufang. The chief hides this secret from his wife - the sister of the Gser tsha Tribe chief. Nevertheless, Bkra mtsho finds this out and interprets this as distrust, straining their already fraught relationship.

Tension arises between the tribes over land disputes after Ma interferes to "settle quarrels" among them. In the past, the tribes settled disagreements among themselves through traditional mediation. However, after the Zi ling government gave the tribal chiefs the title of heads of "a thousand families" and drew clear border boundaries for each tribe, each tribe secretly purchases arms from Ma to strengthen their own power, which is exactly what Ma intended.

Meanwhile, Khe pa Ma ne stays in the Spyang tsha Tribe as a "guest" and shows no sign of leaving.

Spyang tsha was once the strongest and most influential among the three tribes while the other two showed respect toward them. After the Zi ling government establishes its authority and bestows titles, the Spyang tsha Chief feels his status is challenged, motivating his purchase of arms.

Tshe lo, a talented servant, is a favorite of the Spyang tsha chief, who praises him extravagantly. This makes G.yu rtse, the chief's son who grew up with Tshe lo, jealous. The head arranges a marriage between Tshe lo and a pretty servant, Kun skyid, who also loves her new husband. The chief's son is also in love with her, but he cannot express these feelings on account of their different social classes.

The tribal chief gives Tshe lo a rifle and tells him to herd sheep on the land that formerly belonged to Spyang tsha, but is now claimed by the Gser tsha Tribe on the basis of a paper authorized by Ma Bufang's government in Zi ling. When Tshe lo herds the animals, he encounters Lha mo sgrol ma, a young woman from the Gling tsha Tribe who is now married to an abusive Gser tsha man. They have a quick sexual encounter.

One day when a servant is tending the sheep on behalf of Tshe lo, some Gser tsha men attack and take half of the sheep. Spyang tsha



immediately prepares to take revenge. Egged on by Khe pa Ma ne, Spyang tsha sends troops to bring back the sheep by force. Tshe lo, unable to cross a rising river, is captured by Gser tsha men during the fight. G.yu rtse brings the troops back with the stolen sheep. His father criticizes him for not rescuing Tshe lo. G. yu rtse's hate towards Tshe lo only worsens.

The Spyang tsha chief, Nyi bzang, gathers his troops again to attack Gser tsha for detaining Tshe lo, but Tshe lo returns unharmed. During Tshe lo's arrest, he experiences much humiliation from Lha seng's two sons, but Lha mo sgrol ma secretly helps him. The Gser tsha chief Lha seng eventually releases Tshe lo and returns his belongings (horse and gun). He also sends a message to Nyi bzang, asking that they reaffirm the harmonious relationship they previously enjoyed as relatives. But this is rejected by G.yu rtse, the Spyang tsha chief's son, who says their rival is afraid of their new rifles.

Tragedy ensues. G.yu rtse, eager to show off his courage, dies during a gunfight. Soon, Lha seng sends Tshe dpal rgyal (the Gling tsha Tribe chief) to mediate. Subsequently, the Gser tsha Tribe pays silver and livestock in compensation and creates a document stipulating that "Ma mo gong kha," the disputed place, belongs to the Spyang tsha Tribe. These negotiations take place in tents pitched in the border area. A dangerous conflict is thus concluded, but only temporarily.

Nyi bzang's men triumphantly return home from the conflict mediation and find that Bkra mtsho has run off with Khe pa Ma ne. Tshe lo immediately pursues them on horseback. Khe pa Ma ne is stripped naked and released, while Bkra mtsho is brought back to her husband. Nyi bzang goes out of his tent to receive her, and surprisingly, says nothing about her departure.

A troop of soldiers dispatched by Warlord Ma in Zi ling arrives on the grassland and pitch their tents at the border of Spyang tsha and Gser tsha territory. The brutal commander, M+'a yus po, asks the two tribal chiefs to the tent for land dispute mediation. Khe pa Ma ne, now a junior commander, is also there. The Gser tsha Tribe chief's two sons are aligned with Ma and want to pressure the Spyang tsha Tribe.

At the mediation meeting, M+'a yus po announces that both sides must give many horses and a large sum of silver to the Zi ling government in compensation for the land dispute that the two tribes

created. This is a common device used by Ma to exploit those he governs. M+'a yus po also announces that Ma mo gong kha now belongs to Gser tsha, a decision that cannot be altered.

Nevertheless, Nyi bzang rejects this. Provoked, M+'a yus po reaches for his pistol. Displaying courage and shooting skill, Tshe lo shoots the pistol out of M+'a yus po's hand. The Spyang tsha head departs with his men, leaving the Zi ling soldiers and their leader furious and humiliated. Unwilling to give up, M+'a yus po marches his and Gser tsha's troops through Spyang tsha territory. When they reach a mountain pass on the border, they are stopped by Tshe lo and his two friends, Rin chen and Nor 'bum. Forced to retreat to Gser tsha territory, the Gser tsha chief's sons prepare some special treatment for Ma's troops.

Meantime, the Spyang tsha Tribe manager, Sna dmar, is making plans. His newborn son is designated as the reincarnation of Gser tsha Bla ma and Sna dmar is reluctant to tell his master due to the relationship between the two tribes. Sna dmar tries to contact Ma secretly in order to get "official approval" from the warlord Ma's government in Zi ling for his son to be the reincarnate lama. Ma Bufang is "concerned" about the reincarnate as well.

Later, M+'a yus po returns to the grassland with larger troops and asks all three tribe chiefs for a meeting. This time, he asks the tribes to send troops to assist Ma's troops in fighting against the advancing Communist troops. While the other two tribes readily obey the order, the Spyang tsha head sends troops reluctantly and orders them to avoid any real engagement in the fight. Tshe lo brings them back safely while the troops of the other two tribes suffer greatly in the snowstorm. Tshe lo proves his talent one more time.

Ma Bufang does not stop his plotting. A message comes to Spyang tsha. The sons of the heads of the Ma and Gser tsha tribes accuse Tshe lo, Rin chen, and Nor 'bum from Spyang tsha of stealing fifty horses that Gser tsha has offered to Ma as payment for the previous land dispute between the Spyang tsha and Gser tsha tribes. Ma's troops are preparing to attack Spyang tsha again. Rin chen disappears. Nor 'bum refuses to flee as he needs to take care of his mother and sister. Tshe lo is forced to hide in the mountain.

Rin chen, a wanderer and Tshe lo's peer in the Spyang tsha Tribe, brings home a new wife. Tshe lo visits Rin chen's house to congratulate him, but surprisingly finds that the woman is Lha mo sgrol ma. Rin chen reads that something is wrong from the eyes of his new wife and Tshe lo. A seed of distrust is planted in Rin chen's mind towards Tshe lo, which will become a turning point as the story evolves.

During his exile, Tshe lo sees Lha mo sgrol ma arrested by Ma's troops. Now she is Rin chen's wife. Tshe lo saves her from Ma's military tents and finds that Ma's troops have gone to attack his home during night. He and Lha mo sgrol ma go after Ma's troops.

Some households in Spyang tsha are attacked that night. Several people, including Nor 'bum, are killed. Tribal elders now accuse Tshe lo of being the cause of this latest tragedy. Tshe lo learns that Nor 'bum was actually arrested by his own people and offered to Ma's troops in exchange for peace. Tshe lo is asked to surrender for the same purpose. He refuses and flees. Ma's troops return to the tribe frequently to search for Tshe lo.

The Spyang tsha tribe manager, Sna dmar, returns in poor spirits. His wife has died and his son, the reincarnate *bla ma* is in Ma's custody. More bad news arrives. Khe pa Ma ne's troops take Bla ma Chos dbyangs as a hostage. Nyi bzang goes to Khrika (Guide) to save his *bla ma*. En route, they meet Tshe lo bringing the corpse of the *bla ma* who was killed by the Khri ka City governor for refusing to be a puppet of Ma Bufang.

While Spyang tsha holds a funeral for Bla ma Chos dbyangs, news arrives from Gser tsha. Now the Spyang tsha manager Sna dmar's son, who is the new reincarnate *bla ma* of the Gser tsha Tribe, is being held by Ma, who demands huge sums of silver for the boy's release.

The Gser tsha chief's two sons, Snying bha and Ban te byams, start to charge their people large amounts of tax to collect the ransom. This causes a breakup of the tribe as some households choose to leave in order to avoid the tax. The chief, Lha seng, dies in sorrow as he witnesses his two sons becoming intimate with M+'a yus po.

The Spyang tsha chief's wife, Bkra mtsho, was eager for her own son to be the next head, but after his death, she gives birth to a daughter. Worried that her husband will give his position to Tshe lo, she insists on going on a pilgrimage. The couple takes a small

entourage that includes Tshe lo's wife, Kun skyid. They are stopped by Khe pa Ma ne at the bridge checkpoint outside the county town of Khri ka, which is occupied by Ma's troops. Nyi bzang is taken to see the local governor, who killed Bla ma Chos dbyangs. The chief is asked to agree that the new reincarnate *bla ma* of Gser tsha will be the religious leader of both Gser tsha and Spyang tsha tribes and that Bla ma Chos dbyangs's reincarnation should not be installed.

Nyi bzang agrees. The governor's men arrest him and force him to drink liquor to make him drunk. After suffering great humiliation, Nyi bzang is shot and killed by Khe pa Ma ne.

Tshe lo, who served as Nyi bzang's protector, learns of this. He also learns that his wife, Kun skyid, as well as the chief's wife and son jumped into the river to escape arrest. Tshe lo learns that it was Rin chen who revealed Nyi bzang's pilgrimage schedule, which led to the latter's arrest and death.

Now the story comes to the end. Tshe lo points his pistol at Rin chen's head. "Why did you do this? Where did such hatred come from between us friends? We should be united instead."

Rin chen laughs, "Brothers!? What is brotherhood? Should anyone take a brother's wife?"

"You totally misunderstood. Let me explain."

"No. I need no explanation. What I want is revenge. I betrayed the Tribe Chief in order to take revenge on you. Didn't the Chief appreciate you?"

This is a terrible blow to Tshe lo, who lowers his gun. Rin chen quickly takes a pistol from his pocket and points it at Tshe lo's head and then a gunshot rings out and Rin chen collapses. Tshe lo sees Lha mo sgrol ma, holding a rifle behind Rin chen, her husband.

The story ends.

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The story revolves around the disunity between tribes, which Ma Bufang cunningly exploits. These internal and external factors explain the degeneration of all of the tribes, which is accelerated by Ma's military and his sale of weapons. This theme is introduced at the beginning of the novel.

The marriage between the Nyi bzang and Bkra mtsho is an example of internal conflicts. While Nyi bzang ponders how to

maintain his power and influence among the tribes, his wife Bkra mtsho wishes to secure her position in the tribe by making sure their only son G.yu rtse inherits the chief's position. However, the son is killed by his maternal brother's tribe. Their next child is a girl, who cannot be chief. Bkra mtsho, with excessive sadness due to the deaths of her son and brother, and perhaps also tired of the hopeless situation facing her, insists that the family go on pilgrimage to Sku 'bum Monastery despite the unrest outside. All members of the entire family lose their lives in the hands of warlord Ma's people. Up to this point, readers most possibly blame Bkra mtsho for her selfishness and stupid decision to go on pilgrimage at the wrong-time. She is depicted as a controversial character with imperfections.

The romantic relationship between Tshe lo and Lha mo sgrol ma provides another lens through which to view the story. Tshe lo, a servant of the Spyang tsha tribe chief Nyi bzang's family (the chief is his biological father but this relationship is unknown in the tribe, even to Tshe lo himself), is to marry Kun skyid, a female servant in the tribe. But he meets Lha mo sgrol ma and they have secret relationship. Later, they save each other's lives during dangerous moments. Although their relationship is never deeply developed under the author's pen, it has a severe consequence at the end.

Such a romantic yet tragic relationship adds another vividly illustrated twist to the story. These descriptions again bear witness to Stag 'bum rgyal's skills at storytelling.

Stag 'bum rgyal's novels have been criticized for a lack of vividness in the characters they present. In *Degeneration*, the author uses both direct and indirect characterization to create diverse characters.

Nyi bzang is a charismatic figure, both wise and courageous. Despite his effort to maintain the status of the most powerful tribe, he loses his life at the end due to the many layers of internal and external disunity and conflicts, factors which compound the "degeneration" of his tribe.

Tshe lo is another main character in this story. Born to a low-status family, he is depicted as an almost perfect heroic character, clever and brave, a skillful marksman, loyal to his master, and even with leadership ability. In attempting to protect the Spyang tsha

Tribes' chief and tribal interests, he seems always able to change dangerous and unfavorable situations into more favorable ones. He almost loses his life to his friend Rin chen, but the author does not want his hero to die at the end. However, he too is unable to revert the "degeneration" of the tribe.

A few female characters play roles in this story. Bkra mtsho, the Spyang tsha tribe chief's wife, has an important role in the Spyang tsha Tribe, but her short-sighted dreams conflict with her husband's vision. She is a character with inner conflicts. As a mother, she hopes that her son becomes the future chieftain. She is jealous of Tshe lo when her husband shows appreciation towards this servant's talent and bravery. As the sister of a rival tribe's chief, she wishes her brother well, but in a critical moment, she sides with her son to prompt the Spyang tsha troops to attack her brother's tribe, perhaps to prove her loyalty towards her husband's tribe. Her only son, in whom she has invested everything, dies in a conflict with her brother's tribe. Hopeless and desperate, she chooses to flee with Khe pa Ma ne, the foreign "guest" brought by her husband. This is a most insulting betrayal of her husband. But to the reader's great surprise, Nyi bzang shows no signs of anger or hatred towards her. Instead, he goes out of the tent to meet her when she is brought back by Tshe lo. In the end, this couple dies at the hands of Khe pa Ma ne, once a "guest" of the Spyang tsha Tribe.

Another female character, Lha mo sgrol ma, has no better luck. She is depicted as a woman with a certain rebellious attitude towards the male-dominated society. She is forced to marry a man from a different tribe and suffers from her husband's maltreatments. Later she becomes Rin chen's wife. But this restless woman envies Tshe lo, a heroic man from a rival tribe and tries to tie her fate to him. Her secret relationship with Tshe lo becomes another cause for the "degeneration" of the Spyang tsha Tribe.

Whether the author has successfully created the characters in this novel will vary for different readers. In my view, the author has failed to create a single major character throughout this story. Instead, several parallel characters are created as the story evolves.

Bdud lha rgyal (2016) writes in a review of the novel *Nga Yi A Pha Gnyis* 'My Two Fathers' by Tshe ring don grub:

In my opinion, the contents of most of his novels represent objective history and reality. Although there is no doubt that such stories can bring back past memories and raise concerns about those realities, they also give voice to unspoken things existing both objectively and in people's memories. But if focus is put on stories instead of characters, there is danger that the characters will be lost in the process of writing stories and recording facts; it particularly may fail to touch human nature and the depth of the inner world (144).

Although the above comment is not made about *Degeneration*, it applies equally well, reflecting that characterization in novel writing is a weakness of many Tibetan writers.

What is it about human nature that has led to *Degeneration*? How successfully has the author answered this question? While tribal disunity and the intrusion of external forces are obvious factors, what roles do women and love play? In a whirlwind of social unrest, what choices does a woman, a mother, a wife, have? Are they additional causes for degeneration, or its victims? Characters would be more realistic, generate more understanding and empathy if their inner worlds had been developed in the novel.

*Degeneration* realistically portrays a certain historical background, the events of which have painfully scarred Amdo Tibetans. The novel sets the tragic fates of many individuals against a period of social and political turmoil touching on factors such as tribal management, tribal relationships, pastureland disputes, arranged marriages, gender relations, and how religious institutions (monasteries) and personnel (*bla ma*) influence people's decisions within the established social structure. By revealing past tragedies and their causes, the author reminds readers to learn from and prevent their repetition.

Though I have never met Stag 'bum rgyal, I admire him for being a middle school teacher in a relatively rural area who writes about ordinary life and ordinary people, and who continues to write. In his numerous works, he reveals various social problems without reluctance and yearns for a better society. Readers interested in the contemporary history, social structure, and ethnic traditions of Mtsho

sngon Tibetans in the period portrayed, as well as those interested in modern Tibetan literature, will find this novel valuable.

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- འབུམ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་སྤྱང་གཏམ་ལ་འབྲུག་ཙམ་ལྟ་བུ། [A Brief Look at Stag 'bum rgyal's Novels with Modern Eyes] in Ban de mkhar བན་དེ་མཁར། (ed) *Stag 'bum rgyal gyi sgrung gtam la dpyal pa* སྤྱང་གཏམ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་སྤྱང་གཏམ་ལ་དཔྱད་པ། [Studies of Stag 'bum rgyal's Novels]. Zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang མཚོ་སྒྲོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སླུལ་ཁང་། [Mtsho sngon Nationalities Press].
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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'brong bu rdo rje rin chen འབྲོང་བུ་རྡོ་རྗེ་རིན་ཆེན།

a bu ཨ་བུ།

a ma dbang mo ཨ་མ་དབང་མོ།

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

ban de mkhar བན་དེ་མཁར།

ban te byams བན་དེ་བྱམས།

bdud lha rgyal བདུད་ལྷ་རྒྱལ།

Beijing 北京

bgres po dang nor khyu བགེས་པོ་དང་ནོར་ཁྱུ།

bkra bha བརྒ་བཟ།

bkra mtsho བརྒ་མཚོ།

bsod nams rgyal བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱལ།

Chen Bingyuan 陈秉渊

Chengdu 成都

chos skyong ཚོས་སྒྱུང་།

debenjia 德本加

dgon bkra shis don grub དགོན་བརྒ་ཤིས་དོན་གུབ།

dpal ldan rgya mtsho དཔལ་ལྷན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།

g.yu rtse གཡུ་རྩེ།

gling tsha གླིང་ཚ།

gser tsha གསེར་ཚ།

gtso གཙོ།

Hezuo 合作

Gesang Nuobu 格桑诺布

Guide 贵德

Guinan 贵南

Hainan 海南

Junmajiang 骏马奖

kha ba med pa'i dgun kha ཁ་བཤེད་པའི་དགུན་ཁ།

khe pa ma ne ཁེ་པ་མ་ནེ།

khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།

khri tu'u ཁྲི་ཏུ་འུ།

kun skyid ཀུན་སྒྱུད།

lan gru ལན་གུ།

Lanzhou 兰州

lha mo sgrol ma ལྷ་མོ་སྒྲོལ་མ།

lha seng ལྷ་སེང་།

lhing 'jags kyi rtswa thang ལྷིང་འཇགས་ཀྱི་རྩ་བང་།

Ma Bufang 马步芳

M+'a yus po མ་ཡུས་པོ།

ma mo gong kha མ་མོ་གོང་ཁ།

mang ra མང་ར།

mi rab sgsum gyi rmi lam མི་རབས་གསུམ་གྱི་མི་ལམ།

mi tshe'i glu dbyang མི་ཚེ་འི་གླུ་དབྱངས།

mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།

mtsho lho mi rigs dge thon slob grwa མཚོ་ལྷོ་མི་རིགས་དག་སྐོན་སྒྲོབ་གྲུ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

nya yi a pha gnyis འཕྱི་ཡི་ཤ་གཉིས།

nor'bum རོར་འབུམ།

nyi bzang ཉི་བཟང་།

Renmin Wenxue 人民文学

Qinghai 青海

rdo rje don grub རོ་རྩེ་དོན་གྲུབ།

rgud རྒུད།

rin chen རིན་ཆེན།

rnam shes རྣམ་ཤེས།

sbrang char སྤང་ཅར།

Senduo 森多

skal bzang nor bu སྐལ་བཟང་རོར་བུ།

sku 'bum སྐུ་འབུམ།

sku lha g.yag rgyal སྐུ་ལྷ་གཡག་རྒྱལ།

sna dmar སྤ་དམར།

snying bha སྤྱིང་བ།

spyang tsha སྤྱང་ཅ།

stag 'bum rgyal སྐམ་འབུམ་རྒྱལ།

sum mdo སུམ་མདོ།

tshe lo ཚེ་ལོ།

tshe dpal rgyal ཚེ་དཔལ་རྒྱལ།

tshe ring don grub ཚེ་རིང་དོན་གྲུབ།

Wanma Caidan 万玛才旦

Xining 西宁

Zhaba 扎巴

zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།

REVIEW: *DOG, MASTER, AND RELATIVES*

Reviewed by Caihua Dorji (Tshe dpal rdo rje ཚེ་དཔལ་རྡོ་རྗེ།  
Caihuan Duo jie 才还多杰)



Stag 'bum rgyal རྟག་འབུམ་རྒྱལ།. 2009. *khyi dang bdag po/ da dung gnyen tshan dag* ཁྱི་དང་བདག་པོ། ད་དུང་གཉེན་ཚན་དག [Dog, Master, and Relatives]. Zi ling ཟི་ལིང་།: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang མཆོ་སྒྲོམ་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྱུར་ཁང་། [Mtsho sngon Nationalities Press]. 229 pp. ISBN 978-7-5420-1419-1 (paperback 18RMB).

Stag 'bum rgyal (b. 1966) is from a herding family in Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. A member of the China Writers' Association and the Standing Committee of Mtsho lho Writers' Association, Stag 'bum rgyal teaches the Tibetan language at Mang ra Nationalities Middle School. He graduated from Mtsho lho Nationalities Normal School in 1986 and began his teaching career in the same year. Later in 1988, he attended a training program at Northwest Nationalities University and earned a graduation certificate.

Stag 'bum rgyal has published more than sixty short stories, novellas, and novels since 1980s. Among his novellas, *Sgo khyi 'The Watch Dog'*, *Khyi rgan 'The Old Dog'*, *h+'a pa gsos pa'i zin bris 'The Story of Dog Adoption'*, *Mi tshe'i glu dbyangs 'The Song of Life'*, and *khyi dang bdag po/ da dung gnyen tshan dag 'Dog, Master, and Relatives'*<sup>2</sup> have been translated into Chinese and published in such magazines as *Xizang Wenxue 'Tibet Literature'*, *Minzu Wenxue 'Nationalities Literature'*, and *Qinghai Hu 'Qinghai Lake'*. *Rnam shes 'The Soul'*, *Rgud 'Degeneration'*, and *khyi dang bdag po/ da dung gnyen tshan dag 'Dog, Master, and Relatives'*, won the Sbrang char Literature Prize in 1999, 2003, and 2006, respectively.

*Khyi dang bdag po/ da dung gnyen tshan dag* was first published in *Sbrang char* in 2004 and later published again in a

Caihua Dorji. 2018. Review: *Dog, Master, and Relatives*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:288-297.

<sup>2</sup> Robin (2016) translates this title as *A Dog, Its Master and Their Relatives*.  
·288·

collection of his works entitled *Mi rabs gsum gyi rmi lam 'Dreams of Three Generations'*.<sup>1</sup>

Told in the third person and using flashbacks, the story under review has two plots. The first surrounds a wife who had problems with her mother-in-law and cheats on her honest husband, which creates problems in the family. The second plot centers on events in the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

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The story begins in contemporary times with Dkon tho's beautiful wife having problems with her mother-in-law. Unable to solve this issue, Dkon tho's mother leaves the home. Observing this situation, community (the reader never learns the name of this community) elders hold a secret discussion to look for a solution. Before the results of the discussion are given to Dkon tho, an old village man scolds Dkon tho "*Dkon tho, khyod mi ma red, khyod khyi red* 'You aren't human, you're a dog.'"

Dkon tho carefully replies, "I was a red bitch in my previous life."

This holds powerful local resonance, reminding locals of a collection of incidents surrounding the death of a red bitch during the Cultural Revolution. Community elders hold more discussions and decide to persuade Dkon tho to ask his mother to return to his home. They appoint Blo rgyam (Dkon tho's mother's brother) to be in charge of this matter.

The death of the red bitch relates to a government cadre disappearing in the community during those troubled earlier, "revolutionary" times. An ensuing government investigation concluded that the missing cadre had been eaten by local dogs. The county Party secretary, Zhao, then summons all the county government cadres and appoints a Dog Killing Committee headed by Wang Dahai, which is soon dispatched to the community. When Wang and his group arrive, a meeting is convened and locals are told to kill all their dogs<sup>2</sup> to prevent a horrible disease that is transmitted by dogs

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<sup>1</sup> Information about Stag 'bum rgyal is from <http://bit.ly/2lzqV6O> (accessed 31 December 2017), Stag 'bum rgyal (2015), and rdo sbis klu 'bum rgyal (2017).

<sup>2</sup> See the chapter entitled "Dog Massacre" (118-121) in Orgyan Nyima's

to humans. Dkon tho's father is then appointed as the second leader of the Dog Killing Committee.

Blo rgyam agonizes over the fate of their family's red bitch watchdog that came from the mountains several years earlier and never left Blo rgyam's family, loyally guarding the family's sheep from wolves and thieves. Blo rgyam consults Dkon tho's father on how to avoid killing the red bitch. That night, Blo rgyam takes the red bitch to A myes b+ 'a yan Mountain, the abode of a venerated local mountain deity, and orders her to never return to his home.

The committee begins killing the community dogs. Dkon tho's father obediently does whatever Wang orders, even killing his brother's ('Jigs med) daughter's pet dog, which results in her becoming mentally disturbed.

After the dogs are killed, locals worry about how to protect their sheep from wolves. Time passes and the wolves attack, killing many of the community's sheep. This is during the commune period so it provides locals with a good excuse to enjoy the meat from the killed sheep.

To everyone's surprise, none of Blo rgyam's family's sheep were killed by the wolves, and consequently, their family has no meat to enjoy. Blo rgyam's family then decides to slaughter a male sheep secretly at night and report that it was killed by wolves. When Blo rgyam goes to the sheepfold to execute this plan, he sees the red bitch lying near the sheepfold, protecting the sheep. Deeply moved, Blo rgyam gives the sheep's entrails to the dog after butchering the sheep.

The next morning, a fervent revolutionary (a young man whose name we are not told) sees a red bitch running with entrails in its mouth, and reports this to the Dog Killing Committee. Wang Dahai immediately calls a meeting and says the family who owns this red bitch must be identified. Dkon tho's father knows that the dog belongs to his sister's family, but lies that the dog was a stray that Blo rgyam

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(2016) contemporary history of a Kham area for vivid accounts of dog killings, e.g.:

Red Guards and soldiers killed all the homeless dogs in the village. ... The dog killers next came to individual homes and shot family dogs. When some people tried to stop them, the dog killers explained that this was to help people (119).

cared for and that it began roaming again, which explains why it was not killed during the dog killing campaign.

Wang Dahai furiously orders Blo rgyam to stand in front of the local community members and punishes him by assigning him the task of herding the commune's horses. Wang next orders Dkon tho's father to organize the committee into groups and send them into the mountains to find and kill the red bitch. The groups set off but return and report that they were unable to find the dog.

The next day, Wang Dahai himself goes to the mountains to kill the dog with two government cadres, Dkon tho's father, and several revolutionary young villagers. After passing through several valleys, they eventually see the red bitch that, to their surprise, vanishes when they get near. When locals hear about the mysterious, disappearing red bitch, they worry about what may befall them.

Another surprise comes a few days later. 'Jigs med's family's sheep disappear from the sheepfold at night and then the next day, they reappear some distance from the sheepfold. Nearby is a dead wolf. Blo rgyam is further saddened when he realizes that the red bitch fought and killed the wolf to keep the family's sheep safe. Locals then spread the idea that the red bitch is A myes b+'a yan's watchdog.

Subsequent to the circulation of this rumor, the village experience more shocks, e.g., the young revolutionary who had reported seeing the red bitch carrying animal entrails in her mouth becomes mute. Infuriated when he hears the locals' explanation of retribution, Wang Dahai convenes a meeting and admonishes people for being superstitious and counter-revolutionary. He announces that the master of the red bitch, Blo rgyam, is now responsible for killing it within three days, otherwise he will be taken to the county town for interrogation on the grounds of being counter-revolutionary.

Blo rgyam is at a loss but then Dkon tho's father comes to his home. Afraid to kill A myes b+'a yan's watchdog, they decide to find and kill another red bitch. When they are about to set off for their search, they learn that the father of the young revolutionary who had reported the red bitch running with entrails in her mouth in the village had been attacked and killed by a pack of wolves.

Blo rgyam and Dkon tho's father go searching for another red bitch in other communities, but return home empty-handed.



The next morning, Blo rgyam and his wife see the red female dog covered in blood lying near their home. Blo rgyam is very sad when he realizes that the red female dog is dead. Dkon tho's father and Blo rgyam report to the Dog Killing Committee and Wang Dahai that they themselves killed the red bitch. When Wang Dahai sees the dead bitch, he orders a celebratory party with dog meat. Blo rgyam is disgusted by the thought of eating dog meat and leaves with the excuse that he must herd the horses. However, Dkon tho's father stays and eats some of the dog flesh since he has an "official" position on the Dog Killing Committee.

That night, Dkon tho's father becomes ill and dies. Rumors swirl that Dkon tho's father died from eating the flesh of A myes b+'a yan's watch dog.

Dkon tho was born a few months after his father's death.

...

The story then moves back to the present where Dkon tho's mother lives with her brother, Blo rgyam, after she leaves her own home. Since the old villagers felt it was his responsibility to persuade Dkon tho to invite his mother back home, Blo rgyam goes to Dkon tho's home to talk to him. Dkon tho ignores Blo rgyam, who then thought it might be helpful if 'Jigs med talks to him, but 'Jigs med does not do so.

One night, when he returns home drunk, Dkon tho sees his cousin (uncle 'Jigs med's son) sleeping with his beautiful wife. Though he is infuriated, he thinks he cannot win in a fight with his cousin so he quietly takes his cousin's boots and throws them into the river.

The next morning, his cousin goes home barefoot. Realizing several days later that Dkon tho had thrown his boots into the river, he beats him, injuring his forehead. Dkon tho's mother is very angry with Dkon tho's cousin and his family. Blo rgyam now realizes that the source of Dkon tho's family disputes is not Dkon tho, but his beautiful wife, so he should talk to her rather than to Dkon tho. Blo rgyam first takes Dkon tho to the local clinic for treatment and then visits Dkon tho's uncle, 'Jigs med, and suggests that he apologize and give Dkon tho 500 *yuan*. 'Jigs med is enraged and refuses. Next, Blo rgyam asks the village leader, Ska the, to talk to 'Jigs med, but the village leader also shirks this responsibility.

Blo rgyam then summons all the community elders for a discussion. They conclude that Blo rgyam should take responsibility for persuading Dkon tho's wife to leave the community. Elders then persuade 'Jigs med to cover his nephew's medical costs. 'Jigs med provides 300 *yuan*, but Dkon tho is upset with such a small sum and tells the elders to ignore this matter. He adds that he will sue 'Jigs med's son and is confident that he will have the support of the legal system, because he and his wife have a marriage license.

Village elders plead with Dkon tho to not pursue the matter in court and give him another 300 *yuan* that 'Jigs med has provided. Dkon tho reluctantly agrees with the elders, but his mother is still angry with 'Jigs med's family. The elders then consult a local incarnation *bla ma* to divine what should be done to solve Dkon tho's family problem.

The incarnation *bla ma* tells the elders they should do nothing because the matter will solve itself.

Although the reader is not told how, a few days later, Dkon tho's family differences are reconciled and the mother returns to her home. Furthermore, the problems between Dkon tho's and 'Jigs med's families are also solved. But then another issue arises: Dkon tho's family becomes upset with Blo rgyam and does not talk to him. Dkon tho's mother is angry with her brother. She believes her husband (the second leader of the dog killing committee) died, because of her brother's red bitch. Dkon tho now says that his family has only enemies in the village so they plan to move to a neighboring community.

Dkon tho's declaration that his family has only enemies in the village reminds the elders of the red bitch's death so they again visit the incarnation *bla ma*, who says, "There is no reason to stop Dkon tho's family from leaving. Let them do whatever they want. This is Samsara."

The story concludes with the elders accepting this and Dkon tho's family leaving for another community.

The author vividly describes real events and elements of life he experienced. Born in the year the Cultural Revolution began, Stag 'bum rgyal's memories of life, relationships, mentalities, beliefs, and the policies implemented during the Cultural Revolution are well reflected. The complex dispute in Dkon tho's family is an example of how issues

in communities emerged and were worked out during the Cultural Revolution.

Rdo sbis klu 'bum rgyal (2017) notes that a distinctive feature of Stag 'bum rgyal's short stories is dogs, which he maintains, symbolize actual historical life. At times, dogs display human characteristics and at times, people display dog-like characteristics. For example, the red bitch is grateful and loyally returns to Blo rgyam's sheepfold to protect the sheep from wolves and later, to even kill a wolf. This is despite the fact that she was taken back to the mountains from whence she came and ordered to never return to Blo rgyam's home. Finally, when Blo rgyam searches for a red bitch to substitute for his family's red bitch, she returns to die near the family yard as a final, ultimate sacrifice for her master. Producing the bitch's dead body means Blo rgyam avoids detention and condemnation.

Terms involving dogs are used to curse those who commit very bad deeds, e.g., *khyi* 'dog', *khyi skyag* 'dog shit', *khyi phrug* 'son of a bitch', *khyi mo* 'bitch', *khyi rgan* 'old dog', and *h+a pa* 'dog'. Dkon tho amply demonstrates his "dog" character by driving his mother out of his home instead of caring for her. Dkon tho clearly deserves the village elder's negative label of "dog" when the elder scolds, "*Dkon tho, khyod mi ma red, khyod khyi red* You are not human, you are a dog."

Another feature of this short story is its employment of the idea of reincarnation. Dkon tho claims to be an incarnation of the red bitch killed years earlier, the flesh of which his father ate and then died from. Dkon tho was born after the red bitch was killed.

Aspects of Tibetan herding life are also strikingly portrayed, e.g., quarrels between family members that local elders attempt to mediate. For instance, village elders want Dkon tho's wife banished from the community on the grounds that she is the source of serious problems, and appoint Blo rgyam to persuade Dkon tho's wife to leave. They are unsuccessful because Dkon tho's wife disagrees and states that she had nothing to do with her mother-in-law's departure from the home.

Traditional mediation is still practiced in certain communities, but with ambiguous results. For example, I am personally familiar with a situation in which a wealthy Tibetan killed a man in Brag dkar (Xinghai) County in 2016. A local incarnation bla ma then convinced

the deceased's family to accept compensation rather than pursue formal legal channels. Later, the man killed four more people and compensated each of those families, thus avoiding formal legal penalties.

This novel reflects aspects of traditional life in Amdo Tibetan herding communities both during the Cultural Revolution and in contemporary times. The author's vivid description of relationships, mentalities, beliefs, and policies during the Cultural Revolution and traditional mediation deserve reading by those keen to learn more about this culture in general, the Cultural Revolution as described by Tibetans living in China, and contemporary Tibetan herding communities.

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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'jigs med འཇིགས་མེད།

a myes b+'a yan ཨ་མེས་བུ་ཡན།

Amdo ཨ་མདོ།

bla ma བླ་མ།

blo rgyam བློ་རྒྱལ།

brag dkar བྲག་དཀར།

dkon tho དཀོན་ཐོ།

h+'a pa ཧཱ་པ།

h+'a pa gsos pa'i zin bris ཧཱ་པ་གསོས་པའི་ཟིན་བྲིས།

khyi ཁྱི།

khyi dang bdag po/ da dung gnyen tshan dag ཁྱི་དང་བདག་པོ། ད་དུང་གཉིན་ཚན་

དག  
khyi mo ཁྱི་མོ།

khyi phrug ཁྱི་ཕུག།

khyi rgan ཁྱི་རྒན།

khyi skyag ཁྱི་སྐྱག།

khyod mi ma red/ khyod khyi red ཁྱོད་མི་མ་རེད། ཁྱོད་ཁྱི་རེད།

mang ra མང་ར།

mi rabs gsum gyi rmi lam མི་རབས་གསུམ་གྱི་མི་ལམ།

mi rigs dpe skrun khang མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐུན་ཁང་།

mi tshe'i glu dbyangs མི་ཚེའི་གླུ་དབྱངས།

Minzu Wenxue 民族文学

mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྗོ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

Orgyan Nyima འོ་རྒྱན་ཉི་མ།

Qinghai hu 青海湖

Rdo sbis klu 'bum rgyal རོ་སྦིས་ཀླུ་འབུམ་རྒྱལ།

rgud རྒུད།

rnam shes རྣམ་ཤེས།

sbrang char སྤང་ཅར།

sgo khyi སྒོ་ཁྱི།

ska the སྐ་ཐེ།

stag 'bum rgyal སྐག་འབུམ་རྒྱལ།

stag 'bum rgyal gyi sgrung gtam du 'khod pa'i khyi'i rtog brnyan gleng

ba སྐག་འབུམ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་སྤྱང་གཏམ་དུ་འཁོད་པའི་ཁྱིའི་རྟོག་བརྟན་གླེང་བ།

Wang Dahai 王大海

Xinghai 兴海

Xizang Wenxue 西藏文学

Yuan 元

Zhao 赵

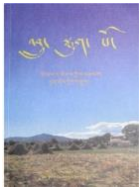
zi ling ཟེ་ལིང་།

REVIEW: *PURPLE HIGHLAND BARLEY*

Reviewed by Pad+ma rig 'dzin པད་མ་རིག་འཛིན།  
(Independent Scholar)



Nima Panduo 尼玛潘多 [Nyi ma phan thogs ཉི་མ་ཕན་ཐོག་མ།]. 2010. *Zi qingke* 紫青稞 [*Purple Highland Barley*]. Beijing 北京: Zuoqia chubanshe 作家出版社 [Writers Press]. 328 pp. ISBN 978-5063-5048-8 (paperback 28RMB).



Nyi ma phan thogs ཉི་མ་ཕན་ཐོག་མ། 2011. '*Bru smug po* འབྲུ་སྐུག་པོ།' [Purple Highland Barley]. Lha sa ལྷ་ས།: Bod ljong pod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang བོད་ལྗོངས་བོད་ཡིག་དཔེ་རྒྱུ་ཁང་། [Tibetan Ancient Books Press]. 527 pp. ISBN 978-78059-107-1 (paperback 29.80RMB).



Nyima Pondor (Stephen F Pomroy and Liu Yujie 刘玉洁, translators). 2016. '*Bru smug po* འབྲུ་སྐུག་པོ།' [*Purple Highland Barley*]. Beijing 北京: Zhong yi chu ban she 中译出版社 [Chinese Translation Press]. 334 pp. ISBN 978-7-5001-4340-6 (paperback 40RMB).

Inside the front cover of the English version of *Purple Highland Barley*, we learn that Nyi ma phan thogs (b. 1971) is from Gzhis ka rtse, and once worked as a civil official, and also as a journalist. She is currently a member of the China Writers Association and Vice-Chair of the Tibetan Writers Association. Since 1992, her novels and prose have been published in *National Literature*, *Tibetan Literature*, *Journal of Literature and Art*, *People's Daily*, and *China City Tour*. Her short story, *Yangzong of Xiega'er Village*, won the 2012 Annual Novel Prize of Chinese National Literature.<sup>2</sup> Other short stories include *QiongZhu's Worries*, *Life at the Tip of a Needle*, and

Pad+ma rig 'dzin. 2018. Review: *Purple Highland Barley*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:298-312.

<sup>2</sup> Told from the perspective of a reporter who interviews the main character, Yangzong, in Lha sa (<http://bit.ly/2pmxhIo> (accessed 20 January 2018), this short story.

*Shepherd Ma'er Qiong*.<sup>1</sup> Nyi ma phan thogs's short stories are based on the real lives of countryside people, and the changing, modern times. *Purple Highland Barley* also reflects contemporary changes in Tibetan areas, and the related inner conflicts of rural residents. I introduce the characters in this novel below in FIG 1.

FIG 1. Characters in *Purple Highland Barley*

A ma chos 'dzoms	Phu villager, mother of four children
Bkra shis	Blacksmith Bkra shis, Phu villager, a blacksmith
Bsam skyid	Phu villager, A ma chos 'dzoms's elder daughter
Bu lags	Seng ge villager, Zla skyid's husband
Byams pa	Lha sa City resident, Bsam skyid's husband
Byang zur	Phu villager, tantric practitioner
Chos 'dzoms	old Lha sa City woman
Dbang phyug	Phu villager, Blacksmith Bkra shis's son
Mtsho mo	Phu villager, Blacksmith Bkra shis's daughter
Nor bu bstan 'dzin	Phu villager, A ma chos 'dzoms's son
Rdo rje	Phu villager, Byang zur's son
Spen skyid	Phu villager, A ma chos 'dzoms's third daughter
Thang rkyal	leader of Phu Village
Tshe ring	Seng ge villager, A ma chos 'dzoms's husband's brother
Zla skyid	Phu villager, A ma chos 'dzoms's second daughter

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<sup>1</sup> <http://bit.ly/2FTkGn8> (accessed 1 November 2016).



The omniscient narrator depicts residents of a small remote Tibetan village in the twentieth century, giving the reader a vivid depiction of Tibetan social change. Particular focus is on Bsam skyid, Zla skyid, Spen skyid, and Nor bu bstan 'dzin - A ma chos 'dzoms's children.

The novel begins with a geographical description of a community enclosed by mountains, limiting contact with the outside world. The weather is harsh, and only coarse, low-yielding *bru smug po* (*zi qingke*) 'purple highland barley' is cultivated, which sells for a cheap price. Phu villagers are disdainfully known as '*bru smug po za mkhan*' 'purple highland barley eaters'.

Though it is the poorest village in Jo mo Township, Phu singing and dancing are famous throughout all of Tibet. Two village homes are special - the family of Byang zur (a lineage of religious practitioners who also practice Traditional Tibetan Medicine), and the house of Blacksmith Bkra shis. The latter inherited the trade from his ancestors. A talented musician, he came to the village as a traveling performer and later married a woman from Phu. He then settled and returned to the more lucrative occupation of blacksmithing.

A ma chos 'dzoms's house is near the bank of a river that is usually dry. Occasionally, however, destructive flash-floods have motivated families to move away from the river bank, increasing A ma chos 'dzoms's isolation. Proud of her *gtsang ma* 'clean' family background, she feels she is better than the blacksmith. This reflects local ideas that relegate occupations such as butchers and blacksmiths to an inferior social class. Members of higher classes may refuse to drink from the same bowl, and generally avoid close relationships with those they deem inferior. Determined to maintain her "pure" lineage, A ma chos 'dzoms opposes her son's (Nor bu bstan 'dzin) marriage to the blacksmith's daughter (Mtsho mo). Despite her objection, Nor bu bstan 'dzin lives with Mtsho mo in Blacksmith Bkra shis' home.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I want to interject here that Tibetans differ in their understanding of "unclean." For example, in my home area - a herding area in Reb gong (Tongren) County in Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province - locals do not view butchers and blacksmiths as "unclean" or "inferior." However, a very similar attitude exists toward families who venerate *the'u rang* (for more on this complex entity, see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996) because they feel this entity will bring bad fortune to them if they are intimate with *the'u rang* families, e.g., sleep in their homes, borrow things from them, and so on. Similarly,

Dreaming of what the city has to offer and dissatisfied with village poverty, A ma chos 'dzoms's second daughter, Zla skyid, is determined to leave her mother's home which she regards as poor. Childless Uncle Tshe ring then brings Zla skid to his home in Seng ge Village and raises her as his adopted child. Her hard work, intelligence, and respectful behavior win his heart, and he comes to truly love Zla skyid.

Later, when Bsam skyid, becomes pregnant, A ma chos 'dzoms orders her to go to Lha sa to find the baby's father. Afterwards, a flood destroys A ma chos 'dzoms' house. Suffering from high blood pressure, this new stress results in her death the following day.

After A ma chos 'dzoms dies, Zla skyid spends a lot of money on the funeral in Phu Village, and then returns to Seng ge Village with Spen skyid. They manage a small bar in Dga gdong County Town. However, in time, Spen skyid grows resentful of Zla skyid's control, the sisters argue, and Spen skyid leaves secretly and does not return. Afterwards, Zla skid works with Dbang phyug to sell goods brought from 'Gram County Town. Their shop eventually becomes the largest wholesale enterprise in Dga gdong County Town.

While conditions in Seng ge Village are better than Phu Village, Seng ge Village is also poor. Villagers lack the skills needed to do anything beyond menial labor so are unwilling to go out and try to earn money.

Differing points of view from the perspective of elders, young people, and children toward film, new clothes, trucks, and trade, vividly illustrate the differences between generations. For example, in Seng ge Village, children often secretly smoke and steal eggs, cheese, and butter to trade for the chance to watch films in the village. Young women secretly exchange butter, cheese, and grain for new clothes, or kitchenware; shop in the streets of nearby Dga gdong County Town; and later are criticized by the older women in their homes.

Trucks are rare and highly desired in Seng ge Village. Owning a truck is a big dream for young men, most of whom cannot afford one. Bu lags, a young Seng ge villager, takes out a bank loan to buy a new

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families who worship Sha za hor ma/mo, a wrathful female protector deity are also regarded as bad, inferior, or unclean.

truck, and his father is so overwhelmed by anxiety that he soon dies. However, Bu lags uses his truck to transport goods which earns good money and increases his social status.

A humorous story is told of an old man who rides a truck home but does not initially pay the eight RMB fee the driver asks. Instead, he tells the driver that he only has five RMB, will pay the remainder later, and mentions that the truck owner is one of his relatives. Refusing to accept this, the driver grabs the old man's robe collar and threatens to beat him. The old man searches in his robe pouch and eventually finds three RMB wrapped in thick layers of plastic.

The old man's inner conflicts and complaints against the new social structure are evident. Traditionally, fellow villagers do not pay each other for mutual help. This is especially true between relatives. These new changes make the old man and other locals uncomfortable. In fact, the truck owner hires a driver in order to avoid having to personally charge acquaintances, which would make him uncomfortable.

The local custom is that brothers share a wife,<sup>1</sup> but young people like Rdo rje, the younger son of Byang zur, who is in love with Bsam skyid, does not want to share his older brother's wife, which is what his mother insists he do. A family quarrel ensues, and Rdo rje flees to the city to make a new life for himself.

Children and young people in both Phu and Seng ge villages are attracted by films that are shown during Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year' using projectors powered by an electricity generator. When Bsam skyid looks for three eggs the family has in order to give them to Rdo rje as he prepares to go to the city, Spen skyid confesses that she gave the eggs to the film operator in order to see a film, another example of how new influences disrupt old patterns, behaviors, and thoughts.

The characters' inner thoughts illustrate their fascination with new technologies. Phu villagers naively think that living in a city is an easy way of life, a place where food and money are easy to come by. However, Bsam skyid and Rdo rje experience the reality of cruel city existence. Bsam skyid misses her family's cup of warm, sweet tea and

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<sup>1</sup> See Ben Jiao (2014) for an important, detailed study of polyandry in rural Tibet.

purple highland barley, and in the end, pushes Rdo rje over the boundary of morality and law to the extent that he is imprisoned.

On the way to the city, Bsam skyid is in a car accident. After leaving the hospital in the city, she is not sure where she should go to look for Rdo rje. When she asks strangers, she meets on the streets, most refuse to talk to her. Finally, one person listens to her long story and gives Bsam skyid an address. She arrives at a big house and waits for the owner to return, hoping for information about Rdo rje.

The landlord returns later, but has no useful information. Bsam skyid sleeps in the yard, hoping someone will be compassionate, and give her shelter. Finally, an old woman sympathetically calls to her. When she asks why Bsam skyid came to the city, Bsam skyid tells everything about herself to the old woman, whose name is Chos 'dzoms (Bsam skyid's old mother's name). In the following days, Chos 'dzoms allows her to share the small room where she lives. Bsam skyid then spends the following days looking for Rdo rje. In the evening, she returns to Chos 'dzoms with food she has purchased. She does this until her money runs out. Afterwards, she feels uncomfortable returning empty-handed, so she begs on the streets. She feels that begging is difficult to do, but she is motivated by her unborn child. Some insult Bsam skyid, saying that she is pregnant though she cannot even feed herself. Over time, begging becomes easier for her to bear.

One night, Bsam skyid feels birth pains while begging at a street corner and quickly returns to the old woman's room where she gives birth. She then considers returning to Phu Village. However, Chos 'dzoms becomes ill and then loses everything in a fire. Bsam skyid then feels obligated to care for her. By this time, her own mother in Phu Village has died, consequently, she never returns home. She marries Byams pa, the driver who survived the car accident with Bsam skyid, and is a government employee in a small office.

Meanwhile, Rdo rje becomes a gambling addict. Later, Bsam skyid and Rdo rje meet in the big yard shared by Byams pa, Chos 'dzoms, and their neighbors. Rdo rje pretends to be the guardian of the son of the woman who lost her life in the car accident, and asks Byams pa for money.

Bsam skyid exposes Rdo rje's scam.

Rdo rje is later hospitalized after a fight following an episode of gambling. To pay for the medical treatment, Bsam skyid gives him money, which Rdo rje pockets, while continuing to solicit money from both Chos 'dzoms and Byams ba. Several of Rdo rje's friends are jailed stealing *thang ka*. They implicate Rdo rje in some thefts and the police eventually arrest him.

In time, Bsam skyid achieves a tranquil life and raises her baby with the help and support of both Byams pa and the old woman.

Wealth and business relationships play an important role in this book. In Phu Village, Dbang phyug makes a better living in the city, and as his wealth increases, his social position ascends. In Seng ge Village, Uncle Tshe ring's neighbor's daughter begins selling milk. Zla skyid is eager to do something similar, but Uncle Tshe ring is afraid of disturbing the neighbor's business and forbids Zla skyid from starting a business.

To avoid directly competing with the neighbor's business, Zla skyid makes and sells cheese and butter. Still later, with government assistance, Zla skyid cooperates with some poor local women to sell milk, butter, and cheese. At the beginning, their business goes very well but later, a woman in their group wraps a layer of fresh butter around some old, rancid butter. This, plus a lack of management skills, creates problems. For example, the group has no designated manager, no clear division of labor and responsibility, and when two of their members quarrel, they are unable to settle the dispute. Finally, one day they forget to tie the cows, which then wander into the County Town, eat dirty, poisonous plastic rubbish, and die. They cannot identify who is at fault and their business group dissolves. These problems with local Tibetan business startups are common experiences as Tibetans transition from the countryside to more urban areas.

Religion plays an important role in both the Phu and Seng ge communities. Foreign doctors treat old people with eye diseases for free in the County Town. A ma chos 'dzoms consults these doctors who recommend a minor operation to improve her eyesight. Nevertheless, she insists on following the advice of Byang zur who discourages her from going through with the operation and she loses her eyesight. Later, she is affected by a mysterious dream in which a *bla ma* gives her permission to become a nun. Her arrogance and prejudice vanish

and she becomes a more compassionate person. A ma chos 'dzoms asks her daughter to shave her head and, afterwards, she spends her time chanting and praying.

Uncle Tshe ring becomes gravely ill, but resists taking modern medicine until a *lha ba* 'sprit medium' (a young woman from another village) gives approval. He recovers, but Uncle Tshe ring, Zla skyid, and his neighbors are confused about what cured him. Was it the modern medicine he took or supernatural powers? Many people in Tibetan areas continue to believe in the power of supernatural healing. The author does not comment on which is right or wrong.

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The pursuit of happiness is a prominent theme. For example, A ma chos 'dzoms names her daughter *skyid* 'happiness'. The little, expanding county town is also called "Dga gdong County Town," which means 'happy' or 'joyful', because people living in remote areas believe that a city is the happiest place. Consequently, young people have a strong desire to work in a city. When Bsam skyid prepares to go to Lha sa City to search for Rdo rje, Spen skyid tells her, "Don't worry, I'll take good care of our mother. After you earn money and have a stable life in the city, then, you can bring Mother and me to the city for a good life." For ten-year-old Spen skyid, the city is like an almighty deity that brings constant delight to those who go there.

In both villages, people have their own way to pursue happiness. Elders such as A ma chos 'dzoms and Uncle Tshe ring prioritize their prestige and clean lineage. When Nor bu bstan 'dzin talks about his beloved girl, Mtsho mo, who is the daughter of Blacksmith Bkra shis, and later becomes Nor bu bstan 'dzin's wife, to A ma chos 'dzoms, she responds:

to live is to fight for your reputation. Nothing is more important. It's common for people of your age to do foolish things. But after getting over this period, you will understand. It doesn't matter if you're poor. Many people live a poor life. As long as we have a devout heart, the Buddha will bestow a happy life on us. But no one can change his family background. Don't do foolish things and bring shame on our family (English version, 16).

This is only a comfort for herself in a life of poverty and unpleasantness, including her son's marriage and her daughter becoming an unwed mother. This brings tremendous shame to A ma chos 'dzoms. For Uncle Tshe ring, he once was respected by the whole village, but one day, a villager has a conflict with him during the harvest festival, which he believes is profoundly disrespectful. He becomes so distraught over this that he slips into a serious illness.

Young people yearn to earn money and gain more social status. For example, Dbang phyug relies on his intelligence to go out and start a business. His "unclean" family background does not prohibit him from earning enough money to build a splendid new house, nor from gaining admiration and respect. In the process of reaching the characters' different goals, we can feel their pride and prejudice, joy and anger, depression and passion as in real life.

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The author's detailed descriptions and use of symbolism expresses the dark, unhappy side of Phu Village. For example, the author describes the sunrise in Phu Village:

When the morning light shone on the top of mountain nearest to Pu [Phu] Village, the dazzling reflections of sunlight on snow would illuminate the whole mountain. At the same time, the Village at the foot of the mountain would be thrown into a darkness which contrasted sharply with the bright mountainside (English version, 6).

Phu villagers are at the mercy of their environment, and cannot improve their limited harvest of purple highland barley, nor can they control the frequent floods.

In Phu Village, unwed mothers are denigrated, and those with unclean lineage, such as the blacksmith's, are held in contempt. They often compare their clothes and silver bowls. Malicious judgments based on such narrowness make them unhappy. For example, Mtsho mo and Nor bu bstan 'dzin's relationship pushes A ma chos 'dzom into a world of inner suffering. When Nor bu bstan 'dzin leaves to go to Mtsho mo's home, A ma chos 'dzoms blames Blacksmith Bkra shis's unclean family background. This depresses Blacksmith Bkra shis, who feels sorry that his daughter was born with such a bad family

background. He often drives his sheep to the mountaintop and sings with his Tibetan guitar. Some say his sheep sing back to him, emphasizing his loneliness and sadness. The author writes that when Blacksmith Bkra shis sings loudly, his toothless mouth resembles a black hole never touched by warm sunshine.

A poignant moment with wonderful detail is described when Bsam skyid informs A ma chos 'dzoms of her pregnancy:

A beam of light shone directly onto Ama Chozom's [A ma chos 'dzoms] face from the skylight and made her feel uncomfortable, so she moved little. The beam then formed a circle on the cushion. Some dust floated in the pillar of light, as though it were dancing gloatingly. Sangjee [Bsam skyid] patted the cushion, arousing more dust to join the dance. She stretched out her hand to grab the dust particles and they avoided her finger (English version, 134).

Why does this light make A ma chos 'dzoms uncomfortable? Why does Bsam skyid cause more dust to "join the dance", why does she clutch at it? This creates an abnormal atmosphere, filled with silence and hesitation. A steady stream of bad luck comes to A ma chos 'dzoms. Her son's scandalous behavior is followed by her daughter's pregnancy, causing her life to lack light, and wrapping her heart in thick layers of sadness. Dust also suggests Bsam skyid's inner turmoil - hesitation, regret, and self-hate. She is unable to cope with her pregnancy without her mother's help. When she blindly tries to abort, her mother disagrees, illustrating a Tibetan worldview that views life is very important; an essential vehicle for a soul to experience enlightenment.

At the beginning and the end, there are no words of love between Zla skyid and Dbang phyug. However, Zla skyid's flashbacks tell us that they once worked together in the city and Dbang phyug took care of her. She had a purple shirt which she loved at the time they were working in Lhasa. She kept it, even when it was old and faded. Because of limited shopping venues, she never got another shirt in her favorite color. In the final chapter, Dbang phyug gives her a purple Tibetan robe, hinting that Dbang phyug had loved Zla skyid for years.



Perhaps, Nyi ma phan thogs used color to imply a connection between the title and Zla skyid.

Phu Village epitomizes the quintessential rural Tibetan hamlet. As I read of the characters' behavior and motivations in comparing and displaying wealth and new clothes at their meetings and horse races, I thought of my own community where traditionally, unwed mothers were less accepted than in 2018. Women in my home community also work very hard, as do Phu Village women, and without complaint.

Phu villagers and purple highland barley are both products of tough natural conditions. Phu villagers continue to farm, even when floods devour their farm land. Even then, elders do not agree when the local government suggests that they relocate far from their homeland.

Purple highland barley grows under harsh environmental conditions. Similarly, Dbang phyug has an unenviable background because his father is a blacksmith and is thus so stigmatized that no Phu villagers will share their bowl with him. Nevertheless, Dbang phyug never gives up and becomes wealthy and gains others' respect. Moreover, Bsam skyid wants to commit suicide when she suffers in Lha sa City, but she does not because of her unborn baby

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I will now comment on the Tibetan and English versions. Tibetan translator, Phun nor, translated the novel from Chinese to Tibetan. His utilization of colloquial Tibetan terms adds realism. The story occurs in Dbus gtsang so the characters speak their own dialect. As an A mdo native, certain words and phrases were unfamiliar, but no less poetic. Terms such as *bong bu/rta g+ha sgril* (Literary Tibetan [LT], *shing rta*) 'cart', *mo Ta'i rgya khra* (LT, *rlangs 'khor lcags gzhong*) 'truck bed', *phru gu sgril gzán* (LT, *'dzong khug*) 'swaddle', *spor to* (LT, *hon log*) 'old man', and *smog* (LT, *dkrugs*) 'stir' are dialect and A mdo readers will only understand such expressions in context. For example, the term *dgu brdung ba* 'exorcism' is a term many A mdo natives would not recognize. The translator is intimately familiar with local customs and culture and is to be congratulated for providing this translation.

Problems in the English version include the translator not using Wylie for the names of characters. Consequently, names are problematic, e.g., Sangjee (Wylie [W], Bsam skyid), Dhajee (W, Dar

skyid), Penjee (W, Spen skyid), Chozom (W, Chos 'dzoms), Chamsu (W, Byang zur), Champei (W, Byang 'phel), Jum (W, Jo mo), Pu (W, Phu), and Karton (W, Dga gdong).

Chapter Seven has six sections in both the original Chinese version and the Tibetan translation but is absent from the English translation. Similarly, Chapter Thirteen (English version) merges the second and third sections. The mark "..." appears under the ninth paragraph of the fourth section of Chapter Eight in both the Tibetan and Chinese versions of the book, but is missing in the English version. Were these differences unintentional or intentional, and, if the latter, why?

The ideas and meaning in the Tibetan and Chinese versions are identical. The Tibetan terms and proverbs in the Chinese version are translated almost literally, e.g., *gawu* (C, *gawu*; W, *ga'u*) 'charm box'/'amulet'; *xiema* (C; W, *shad ma*) 'good quality wool cloth'; and *qindian* (C; W, *byin ldan/rten*) 'sacred relics'.

Tibetan proverbs used in the Chinese version: *xiang bu dao si de ren* (W, *shi rgyu mi dran mkhan*) 'never thinks he will die', and *ba wo de lao lian ren dao ya lu zang bu jiang li qu le* (W, *nga'i ngo yar klung po'i nang bskyrur*) 'you have brought shame on me/you have done such a humiliating thing', lend authenticity to the Chinese version.

Problems in the English version include *byin ldan* translated as 'medicine,' but as the translation 'sacred relics' above suggests, *byin ldan* is something quite different. Another example is the proverb *gros mi la dris/gros thag rang gis gcod* 'Ask others what to do, but make decisions by yourself', which is translated into English as 'Ask others what to do before you make your decision' (English version, 216). ...*bsang dud 'dra btang /byin ldan 'dra za rgyu ma gtogs byed rgyu med*/(Tibetan version, 326) is translated as '...we need to simmer some mulberries and give her some medicine' (English version, 215), but a better translation is "all we can do is make an incense offering, and have her take *byin ldan*."

At times, the English translators used incorrect Tibetan pronunciations derived from the Chinese, e.g., (W) *sgra snyan* 'Tibetan guitar' appears in the English version as *tanenchein*. 'Tanen' is the Chinese version of the Tibetan *sgra snyan* and 'qin' is the

Chinese term for 'guitar', hence *tanenchein* appears in the English version. A Google search for this term located it only in the English version of this novel. Another example of dubious translation occurs in the English version of *aur cha* 'Tibetan slingshot', which is given in the English version as *kurtu*. I do not know what this may derive from. Tibetan terms exist for these lexical items, therefore, Wylie should be used, not an approximate of the Chinese terms. Translators are encouraged to read/consult Tibetan-language versions of Tibetan-culture-based texts when translating to English.

English readers would benefit from cultural notes such as explanations for such terms as *kurtu* 'Tibetan slingshot' and why some Tibetans stick out their tongue when they meet an elder or important person.

A mdo readers will find the Tibetan version of interest because of its colloquial lexical items typifying Lha sa dialect. In addition, Dbus customs are illustrated, giving A mdo readers a better understanding of how varied life in the Tibeto-sphere is.

Finally, *Purple Highland Barley* realistically depicts the ordinary life of rural Tibetans, including birth-to-death customs and rituals; the messiness that so often characterizes contradictions in real life; and the disempowering, bewildering impact technology and associated modern norms have on elders. Insight into women's inner, secret worlds in a complex tapestry of values, norms, loves, personal expectations, fears, and emotions bring the reader closer to Tibetan women.

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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'bru smug po za mkhan འབྲུ་སྤྱུག་པོ་ཟ་མཁན།

'dzong khug འཛོང་ཁུག།

'gram འགྲམ།

a ma chos 'dzoms ཨ་མ་ཚོས་འཛོམས།

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

bkra shis བརྒ་ཤིས།

bong bu/rta g+ha sgril བོང་བུ། རྟ་གླེན།

bsam skyid བསམ་སྦྱིད།

bu lags བུ་ལགས།

byams pa བྱམས་པ།

byang zur བྱང་ཟུར།

byin ldan/rten བྱིན་ལྡན། རྟེན།

dbang phyug དབང་ཕྱུག།

dbus དབུས།

dbus gtsang དབུས་གཙང་།

dga gdong དག་འགོད་།

dgu brdung ba དགུ་བརྟུང་བ།

dkrugs དཀྲུགས།

gzhis ka rtse ཀཞིས་ཀ་རཙེ།

hon log རྟོན་ལོག།

jo mo རྩོམ།

la tse ལ་ཙེ།

lha ba ལྷ་བ།

lha sa ལྷ་ས།

Liu Yujie 刘玉杰

Ma'er Qiong 玛尔琼

mo ta'i rgya khra མོ་ཏའི་རྒྱ་ཁྲ།

mtsho mo མཚོ་མོ།

Nima Panduo 尼玛潘多

nor bu stan 'dzin འོར་བུ་སུ་ས་འཛིན།

pad+ma rig 'dzin པད་མ་རིག་འཛིན།

phru gu sgril gzan ཕུ་གུ་གླེན་གཟན།

phu ཕུ།

phun nor ཕུན་ནོར།

QiongZhu 琼珠

rdo rje རྡོ་རྗེ།

rlangs 'khor lcags gzhong རྒྱངས་འཁོར་ལུགས་གཞོང་།

seng ge སེང་གེ།

sha za hor ma/mo ཤ་ཟ་ཧོར་མ། མོ།

shing rta ཤིང་རྟ།

smog སློག།

spen skyid སྤེན་སྙིད།

spor to སྤོར་ཏོ།

the'u rang ཐེ་འུ་རང་།

tshe ring ཚེ་རིང་།

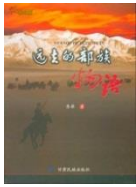
Xiega'er 协噶尔

Yangzong 央宗

zla skyid ལྷ་སྙིད།

REVIEW: *TRIBAL STORIES REMEMBERED*

Reviewed by Lhamodrolma ལྷ་མོ་སྒོལ་མ། (Lha mo sgrol ma, Lamaozhuoma 拉毛卓玛, Qinghai Normal University 青海师范大学)



Xiuyan 秀雁. 2009. *Yuanqu de buzhu wuyu* 远去的部族物语 [*Tribal Stories Remembered*]. Lanzhou 兰州: Gansu minzu chubanshe 甘肃民族出版社 [Gansu Nationalities Press]. 186 pp. ISBN 978-7-5421-1587-4 (paperback 48RMB).

The author Xiuyan, also known as Aqiong (A Qiong, A mchong, b. 1965), is from Zhiduo ('Bri stod) County, Yushu (Yul shul) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai (Mtsho sngon) Province. She is a retired teacher who once taught at the Yushu Campus of the College of Tibetan Literature, Qinghai Nationalities University. Aqiong has also received training from the Lu Xun Literature Institute. Her published works include her first novel - *Tribal Stories Remembered* (2007); *Yushu da dizhen* 'The Yushu Earthquake' documenting the aftermath of the 2010 Yul shul earthquake; a collection of stories entitled *Tiankong yijiu zhanlan* 'The Sky is Still Blue' (2015); and a novel, *Du kou hun* 'The Spirit of the Ferry Business' (2016). In addition to these works, Aqiong has also written poetry and articles.<sup>2</sup>

Aqiong's literary works are based on traditional Kham (Khams) society and culture, with a focus on her native Yushu. Through her writings, she documents and reflects on local historical realities. The overriding theme of her work is local people's life stories in critical times, revealing the interactions and conflicts among the local people and between locals and outsiders, and portraying a vibrant society of rapid change (Ge 2017).

*Tribal Stories Remembered* is set in the Kham Tibetan area from 1900 to the late 1940s, a time of major sociopolitical changes in China, and reflects the historical realities of that period. The

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Lhamodrolma. 2018. Review: *Tribal Stories Remembered*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:313-318.

<sup>2</sup> Aqiong provided the information in this paragraph.

protagonist, introduced as "the Chinese monk" (hereafter TCM), is based on a real character who was born to a wealthy Chinese family that declined due to his grandfather's addiction to opium. He received higher education at Beijing University. Influenced by his uncle, who strongly believed in Tibetan Buddhism, he became a monk. At the age of twenty-six, he studied Buddhism with Lama Babang saiduo at Dege (Sde dge) Monastery. TCM's obvious intelligence led Lama Babang saiduo to introduce him to Lama Angga, who was well-known in Kham (and also a real historical figure). Later forced to become a layman, TCM married a local Tibetan woman and lived the remainder of his life in the Angwang Tribe in Kham.<sup>1</sup>

The novel follows TCM's life in a Tibetan tribe, narrated by his son in the first person. Different parts and stages of TCM's life - as a monk at Tibetan monasteries, as a married man, a father, and a well-educated man enthusiastic about scholarly work and education - are described in the circumstances of the Tibetan setting in which he lived. The story shows how his life trajectory was greatly impacted by the sociopolitical conditions of the local and larger Kham Tibetan area. For instance, TCM was forced to become a layman because Chieftain Guoma disliked him. Chieftain Guoma was greedy and invaded the land of the Tongqie Tribe, which resulted in disputes and conflicts between the two tribes. TCM used the issue as an example of bad conduct when he gave his teachings. In revenge, Chieftain Guoma used his relationship with the regional military ruler, Ma Bufang<sup>2</sup> (referred to as "Ma"), to force TCM to break his religious vows and to become a layman, which was regarded as dishonorable. TCM and his wife and son suffered, as did everyone else in the Angwang Tribe during this period.

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<sup>1</sup> The author told me that TCM and Lama Angga are real characters, while the others are fictional.

<sup>2</sup> Qinghai Province of the Republic of China was formed in 1928. In the 1930s, the Muslim warlord, Ma Bufang (1903-1975), gained control of the northeastern part of Amdo, which was officially annexed to Qinghai Province. In 1949, the Nationalists appointed Ma the military governor of northwest China. However, in August of 1949, the advancing PLA defeated his troops and the Communists gained control over the area (Powers and Templeman 2012:51-52).

Situated in the context of twenty-five Tibetan tribes in Xikang,<sup>1</sup> the first half of the novel details the contacts and conflicts among five of the local tribes - Angwang, Naihe, Tongqie, Angcuo, and Guoma. The details of the interactions among these tribes illuminate many important features of traditional Tibetan lifestyle, some of which no longer exist. Religious belief, chieftainship, and traditional law and marriage patterns were some of the vital factors that influenced the political and social relations within and among the traditional tribes.

The crucial role of religion in the lives of Tibetan is reflected in the novel in various ways. For instance, Angwang was the chieftain of the Angwang Tribe. He was also a lama at a local monastery, as was his brother. Angwang and his family's influence meant he had a strong political voice and was effective in managing and solving local affairs, which also contributed to his business success. TCM was also accepted and respected by local Tibetans because of his interest in and knowledge of Buddhism.

Chieftainship was an important aspect of traditional Tibetan tribal society. Different ranks of chieftainship constituted the local power structure. The five tribes described in the novel belonged to the chieftainship of One Hundred Households (Ch. *baihu*), with each tribe being ruled by one *baihu*. Chieftains of the same rank were independent of each other in terms of power relations. However, higher ranking chieftans, e.g., *qianhu* 'Chieftain of One Thousand Households' had authority over lower ranking chieftains. The chieftains were the main players in the local sociopolitical organization, and the chieftainship title was inherited within a family. Tribesmen obeyed their chieftain and regarded themselves as "his people." Thus, legitimate inheritance of the chieftainship and locals' acknowledgement were essential in maintaining rigid, hierarchical sociopolitical tribal structures.

The novel also portrays how traditional law played a key role in organizing social affairs and maintaining social harmony. Concepts of "right" and "wrong" were largely shaped by people's understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> A province established in 1939 that included much of the Kham Tibetan area. Xikang Province was divided between Sichuan Province and the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1955.



traditional law. For example, when a tribal member betrayed his chieftain and sought protection from another, the deed was criticized by people from both tribes with the issue subject to mediation. Major conflicts such as inter-tribal conflicts were solved in the same way.

Marriage patterns also figure prominently, illustrating how similar social status was important in creating marriage connections. The chieftains' descendants sought spouses of similar social status to further elevate and strengthen their social position and resist invasion from other tribes. Meanwhile, ordinary people married among themselves. This marriage pattern reflects a clear division between the powerful and the powerless. Challenges to this marriage pattern, as a result of free love for instance, were unacceptable.

The second half of the novel focuses on political interactions between the local Tibetan tribes and Ma's force. In the 1930s, Ma sought to cooperate with local chieftains as a way to increase his power among local Tibetan tribes. The chieftains evaluated and judged the situation based on their own interests and benefits and acted accordingly. Some chose to be neutral while others rejected Ma's proposals. Guoma, the chieftain of the Guoma Tribe, allied with Ma to protect himself from other chieftains who disliked him.

Regardless of the stand a chieftain took, in the end Ma's army waged wars against those who refused or could not pay his heavy taxes. Ma's soldiers killed many local Tibetans, stole their livestock, and forced the tribes to abandon their homes and land to seek shelter elsewhere. Ma was active and powerful in Tibetan areas until the Chinese Communist Party assumed control in the late 1940s. The story ends at this point, heralding a new historical moment.

Though valuable in its portrayal of the structure and life of Kham prior to the 1950s, it is limited in terms of providing a broad historical and political context of China and the world. For example, a conflict is mentioned between Tibetans and the British, but the historical background information that is necessary for a better understating of the event is lacking. Furthermore, a brief overview of the political structure of China in the early twentieth century would help clarify contemporary events in Tibetan tribes. Nevertheless, the novel is a fascinating read. Those interested in learning about traditional life in tribal societies - particularly Tibetans - would find

the novel of interest. As the author told me in an online chat, "The novel reflects on the nature of history, but not the truth of history!"

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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'bri stod འབྲི་སྟོད།

Ang ga 昂噶

a mchong ཨ་མཚོང་།

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

Anduo 安多

Angcuo 昂措

Angwang 昂旺

Aqiong 阿琼

Babang saiduo 巴帮赛多

Beijing 北京

baihu 百户

Dege Monastery 德格印经院

Du kou hun 渡口魂

Gansu 甘肃

Guoma 郭麻

Khams 康巴

Lanzhou 兰州

Linxia 临夏

Lu Xun 鲁迅

Ma Bufang 马步芳

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོང་།

Naihe 乃禾

qianhu 千户

Qinghai 青海

Tian kong yi jiu zhan lan 天空依旧湛蓝

Tongqie 同切

Xikang 西康

yul shul ཡུལ་ཤུལ།

Yushu 玉树

Yushu da di zhen 玉树大地震

Zhiduo 治多

REVIEW: *THE OATH OF BULONGDE*

Reviewed by 'Brug mo skyid བླུ་མོ་སྐལ་འཁོར་ (Zhoumaoji 周毛吉,  
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Liangjiong·Langsa 亮炯·朗萨. 2006. *Bulongde shiyan* 布隆德誓言 [*The Oath of Bulongde*]. Beijing 北京: Waiwen chubanshe 外文出版社 [Foreign Language Press]. 375 pp. ISBN 7-119-04529-6 (paperback 36RMB).



Lainchung Nangsa (Stephen F Pomroy and Dong Rui, translators). 2016. *The Oath of Polungde*. Beijing 北京: Zhongyi chubanshe 中译出版社 [Chinese Translation Publishing House]. 761 pp. ISBN 978-7-5001-4335-2 (paperback 60RMB)

Liangjiong Langsa (Rnal 'byor gnam sa, Jiang Xiuying, Lainchung Nangsa)<sup>2</sup> was born in Ganzi County, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan. She worked as a teacher after graduating from university and then as a clerk. She has published three novels (*Bulongde Shiyan* 'The Oath of Bulongde', *Xunzhao Kangba Hanzi* 'Looking for Khams Men', and *Qingji Sangde'er* 'Love Sacrifice in Sangde'er'); and a prose selection *Huihong Qiannian Chama Gudao* 'Grand Millennia Tea-Horse Road'. *Bulongde Shiyan* ranked in the top ten bestsellers in many Chinese cities and has been termed "A Grand Heroic Song of the Tibetan Khams-pa."<sup>3</sup> An English translation titled *The Oath of Polungde* was published in 2016.<sup>4</sup>

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'Brug mo skyid. 2018. Review: *The Oath of Bulongde*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:319-332.

<sup>2</sup> I was unable to identify certain of the Tibetan equivalents for lexical items used in the Chinese original. Consequently, I use Pinyin to write these terms. I have made exceptions, however, which are listed in the Non-English Terms at the end of this review.

<sup>3</sup> Pomroy and Dong Rui (2016).

<sup>4</sup> It is one of "Reading China's Tibetan Stories" including *Erathem* (Tsring Norbu), *Kangba* (Dazhen), *Paper Plane* (Yan Yingxiu), *Purple Barley* (Nyima Pandor), *Hidden Face* (Gerong Zhuimei), *The Kangba Way* (Jiangyang Tsering), and *Mortals [Love] in Lhasa* by Pema Nadron (<http://bit.ly/2BCL5CM>, accessed 30 January 2018).

Liangjiong Langsa, a member of the Sichuan Provincial Writers Association and the China's Writers Association, has a publishing history dating to 1984.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, she was one of several vice-chairmen of the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.<sup>2</sup>

Liangjiong Langsa writes in Chinese, but the settings are in her "deeply loved homeland"<sup>3</sup> - Kham Tibet. This is emphasized by her name, given by her parents, which translates as 'Highland Plateau Daughter'. Likewise, *Xunzhao Kangba Hanzi 'Looking for Kham Men'* and *The Oath of Bulongde* emphasize the heroic nature of Kham men (Xu Qin 2015:33).

Compared to the number of male writers, Tibetan women writers are few (Yangdon Dhondup 2017). Mkha' mo rgyal's *Phyur ba 'Dried Cheese'*<sup>4</sup> published in 2015 is the first long Tibetan women's novel written in Tibetan language (Robin 2016:86). Tibetan women writers have published more in Chinese than in Tibetan. Xu (2015:14) and Yangdon Dhondup (2017) observe that Tibetan female writers writing in Chinese began publishing novels in the 1950s. Novels by Yixi Zhuoma, considered the pioneer of Tibetan women writing creative literary work in Chinese (Xu 2015:14), include *Mei Yu Chou 'Beauty and Ugliness'* and *Qingchen 'Early Morning'* are both in the context of the Liberation of China (Xu 2015:14).

Meizhuo, another productive Tibetan woman writing in Chinese, has published a number of works. Her two long novels, *Taiyang Buluo 'The Sun Tribe'* and *Yueliang Yingdi 'The Moon Camp'*, present stories set in the 1930s to 1940s (Xu 2015:15-16). In contrast, Liangjiong Langsa's *Bulongde Shiyuan* tells a story of Tibetan chieftains in Kham area in the late Qing Dynasty. Her choice of historical background in her novel thus predates other Tibetan women writers.

Bearing some similarity to the novel under review, Alai (b. 1959), a Tibetan male writer, published *Chen'ai Luoding 'The Dust Settles'* (published in English as *Red Poppies*) about a Tibetan chieftain's family in Kham from its heyday to its decline. In contrast, Liangjiong

<sup>1</sup> <http://bit.ly/2FsMe1V>, accessed 30 January 2018.

<sup>2</sup> <http://bit.ly/2DLg6X4>, accessed 30 January 2018.

<sup>3</sup> From a single page, unnumbered preface to *Bulongde Shiyuan*.

<sup>4</sup> See my review ('Brug mo skyid 2017).

Langsa's tale of the Wengzha Chieftain in *Bulongde* makes good use of the story of a caravan boy trading along the Tea-Horse Road.

"Bulongde," the setting of the novel under review, translates as 'residence of majestic mountains and glorious rivers', and can also be rendered 'man from the auspicious valley'. Consequently, another appropriate title for this novel is '*The Oath of the Man from Auspicious Valley*'. The title of the novel thus highlights the setting, main character, and heroism of Khams men. A saying goes "Religion in Dbus gtsang, men in Khams, horses in A mdo." Khams men have earned this sobriquet for strong physiques and brave, heroic souls.<sup>1</sup> Liangjiong Langsa praises the heroism of Khams men and enhances the Khams ethnic spirit both in *Bulongde Shiyan* and *Xunzhao Kangba Hanzi*.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the ancient Tea-Horse Road<sup>3</sup> is another important setting in the novel of *Bulongde Shiyan*, where the heroism of these men are not only presented through struggle against aristocratic oppression, but also proved through overcoming the harsh environment (Xu Qin 2015:33).

*Bulongde Shiyan* consists of twenty-three, untitled chapters. A few lines of brief description appear just under the number of each chapter in "Contents." These lead-ins describe the characters and theme of the chapters, alerting the reader to key events. Furthermore, at the top of each chapter in the actual text is a quote reflecting moral lessons in the chapters. These quotes are from such works as *Danzhu'er*, *Epic of King Gesar*, and *the Eight Great Tibetan Dramas*,<sup>4</sup> folk sayings, and poems written by figures such as the sixth

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<sup>1</sup> Many Tibetans contend that Khams men are stronger and physically larger than men from other Tibetan areas and perform well during conflicts.

<sup>2</sup> Liangjiong Langsa (2006: Xu [Preface]: no page number).

<sup>3</sup> The Tea-Horse Road began in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, ran along a center of tea production in the eastern foothills of the Hengduan Mountains, crossed the Hengduan Mountain range and canyons of several major rivers, and then reached India (Yang nd).

<sup>4</sup> *Danzhu'er* (*Bstan 'gyur*) refers to a Tibetan translation of a collection of Indian commentaries on the Buddha's teachings. *Epic of King Gesar* (*Ge sar rgyal bo'i sgrung*), often described as the longest literary work in the world, praises King Gesar, ruler of the legendary Kingdom of Gling, who subdued various negative spirits that disturbed Tibetan areas. *The Eight Great Tibetan Dramas* (*Bod kyi zlos gar chen mo bgyad*) include *Chinese Princess Wencheng*, *King Nor bzang*, *Snang sa 'od 'bum*, *Gro ba bzang mo*,

Dalai Lama (Tsangs dbyangs rgya mtsho, 1683-1706) and well-known figures in Tibetan religious history such as Mi la ras pa (1040-1123). Here are two examples of such quotes:

The brave little wild horse in northern Tibet  
 Raises its head high though dead  
 Not hoping for freedom  
 But because of its natural resolution

The white snow lion king in the west  
 Remains in snowy mountains though cold  
 Not because it has nowhere to go  
 But because of its integrity as a ruler

The king of birds in the east,  
 Flies high in the sky without stopping  
 Not because it fears falling  
 But because its goal is to reach the clouds  
 - Song of Mi la ras pa (Liangjiong Langsa, 2006:132)<sup>1</sup>

Dear Clouds, please let me tell the way you are to go, please remember my message you are to take. When exhaustion comes to you along the way, rest on the mountain peak. When thirst can no longer be endured, drink river water.

Dear Clouds, when you reach her side, if she is still asleep, please don't wake her. Accompany her and sleep for an hour. Please don't let her tender arms leave me again when she meets me in a momentary dream.  
 – from *Danzhu'er* (Liangjiong Langsa, 2006:324)<sup>2</sup>

Heroism, a core concern of the novel, is expressed through a young man with two names, which represent his two identities. "Langji" is the name given by his parents when he was born in the family of Wengzha,

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*Gzugs kyi nyi ma, Pad ma 'od 'bar, Don yon don 'grub, and Dri med kun ldan.*

<sup>1</sup> My translation.

<sup>2</sup> My translation.

Chieftain of Bulongde. Langji's father, a compassionate chieftain, established a school for all children, regardless of their social class in the area of his control. He ruled with sympathy and compassion, reduced taxes, and eliminated such cruel punishments as gouging out prisoners' eyes and cutting off their tongues. His fame and benevolence were widely praised and took root in the hearts of those in Bulongde, except for Duoqi Wangdeng and Zeren Changzhu. The former was his stepbrother and Zeren Changzhu was Duoqi Wangdeng's housekeeper.

Hatred and enmity emanated from Duoqi Wangdeng's jealousy toward Langji's father, Wengzha Along Jiebu, and his ambition to take the chieftain's position. With help from Zeren Changzhu, Duoqi Wangdeng murdered Wengzha Alun Jiebu and became the new Wengzha Chieftain of Bulongde. Duoqi Wangdeng also wanted Langji's mother, Zega, to be his wife. However, Zega had promised Wengzha Alun Jiebu that she would raise Langji as the rightful heir to the Wengzha chieftainship. Therefore, she escaped from Bulongde with Langji in an attempt to reach her brother, the Headman of Maikaxi Hegu - an attempt that required some six years.

To avoid Duoqi Wangdeng's men, Zega and Langji avoided thoroughfares, instead crossing vast grasslands, climbing snow-covered mountains, sleeping in caves, and often going hungry. When they herded sheep for a nomad family in return for shelter and food, they were beaten by a local headman who accused them of stealing his property. Consequently, Zega eventually died from hardship and illness.

Finally, with help from a caravan chief, Sangpei Luobu, who saved his mother and him from hunger and cold, Langji found his uncle, with whom he lived for about three years. However, after mistreatment from his uncle's wife and son, Langji returned to the caravan group using the name Jianzan.<sup>1</sup>

The Sangpeiling Caravan, started by Sangpei Luobu's father, regularly traversed Khams areas by horse, exchanging tea, silk, and other goods for local products. Strong young men from Sangpei Valley made up the caravan crew. Like other caravans, the Sangpeiling Caravan traded their products for locals' animal skins, carpets, and

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<sup>1</sup> This name translates literally as 'strong praise'.



livestock products. Other mobile merchants included outfits acting on behalf of temples, chieftains, and aristocrats that collectively created a broad, complex market on the Tea-Horse Road. During festivals or religious ceremonies in places such as Bulongde, caravans and merchants formed a large temporary trade center. Caravans with sufficient manpower and capital that frequently traveled made considerable profits.

Once Jianzan was taken in by the caravan, he was accepted and raised as the son of Sangpei Luobu, who eventually understood Jianzan's past and desire for revenge. Sangpei Luobu taught him to wait patiently until he was both mentally and physically ready to confront the cruel Wengzha Chieftain, Duoji Wangdeng.

Jianzan gradually became the most outstanding boy on the caravan - brave, strong, kind, and just - and helped Sangpei Luobu lead the crew on the basis of principles and justice. He withstood the harsh environment and attacks from robbers and wild animals along the trade route, maintaining the safety of goods and crew. His upright character, good looks, and extraordinary skills gained him fame and prestige among the caravans. Observing Jianzan's many good points, Sangpei Luobu wanted Jianzan to lead the caravan with his own son, Tasen, when he retired from caravan work. Nevertheless, the idea of avenging his parents had taken root in Jianzan's mind and each of his actions was planned to accomplish this mission without consideration of other possibilities for his life.

The Sangpeiling Caravan regularly stopped at Bulongde to trade with Wengzha Chieftain and others living nearby. On such occasions, Jianzan did his best to get near his hated enemy, Duoji Wangdeng.

In the year Jianzan was twenty-two years old, Duoji Wangdeng took part in horse race festivities held in Bulongde. He took aim at a round target painted in three different colors with an arrow passed from the first Wengzha Chieftain. He missed, thus failing to successfully complete this key ritual. According to Xirao Huofo, the religious master of Langze Monastery, a nearby monastery supported by Wengzha Chieftain, Duoji Wangdeng was then required to find a twenty-two-year-old man who was born in the year of the horse hit the target with the same arrow and bow that he had used. If this young

man missed the target, misfortune would befall Duoji Wangdeng. By happenstance, Jianzan was the right age and zodiac year. Jianzan hit the target, which delighted Duoji Wangden and gave Jianzan the opportunity to enter Bulongde Palace, where he caught the attention of Duoji Wangdeng's two princesses.

Saducuo, the elder daughter, was brave and intelligent, and also ambitious and cruel, like her father. Without sons, Duoji Wangdeng planned for her to be the next Wengzha Chieftain of Bulongde. Saducuo directly expressed her love to Jianzan, which led him to temporarily forget his desire for revenge. However, when he witnessed Saducuo mercilessly killing a rare red doe with a white mouth that was nursing its fawn in a forest near Bulongde, he rid himself of illusions and sympathy for Duoji Wangdeng's family. He then made every effort to gain Duoji Wangdeng's trust under the guise of Saducuo's love and also his friendship with Wocuoma, the younger sister.

A few years earlier, Jianzan had failed in an assassination attempt. During a religious ceremony held in Langze Monastery, Jianzan attempted to shoot Duoji Wangdeng in the crowd, but had mistakenly killed Duoji Wangdeng's housekeeper, Zeren Changzhu, who was dressed in the same clothes as his master. Duoji Wandeng ordered his men to capture the killer, who was disguised in red from head to toe, and who was riding a reddish-brown horse. They failed after Jianzan rushed across a deep, frigid river and disappeared in the forest on the other side. This incident made Duoji Wangdeng more cautious and surround himself with additional guards.

During a summer picnic, Jianzan failed again when trying to kill Duoji Wangdeng by thrusting a knife into his chest. Jianzan was captured and incarcerated in Bulongde Palace's dungeon. Duoji Wangdeng was seriously injured and it is a long while before he recovers. Though ashamed that she is in love with her father's attempted killer, Saducuo does not deny her true love for Jianzan, the only man she ever truly admired and loved. While assisting her father maintain his authority and power, she asks Wocuoma to give medicine to Jianzan to help him recover from wounds caused by beatings and whippings and the dungeon's miserable conditions.

After meeting Wocuoma twice, Jianzan no longer hides his love and reveals his true identity. Wocuoma gradually accepts that her father killed Wengzha Alun Jiebu to steal the position of chieftain and then helps Jianzan escape.

Jianzan and Wocuoma's betrayal enrages Duoqi Wangdeng and Saducuo, who try every means to capture Wocuoma and kill Jianzan, but fail. Meanwhile, Jianzan and his friends, Tasen and Nima, attack the chieftains who had killed their loved ones. Helping the poor and weak with what they steal from the chieftains, earns them the praise of the common people, and the curses the chieftains and headmen.

Over the years, many areas of Khams suffered from both natural disasters and exploitation of the ruling class, which translates into a group of nearly a thousand rebels. Under Jianzan, Tasen, and Nima's leadership, the rebels abide by principles and regulations. No longer committed to attacking a few chieftains and headmen, they march from place to place, defeating chieftains in the vast Khams area and freeing people from oppression.

As the number of chieftains decreases, the stronger ones unite and send for support from the Qing Dynasty government. After several battles between Wengzha Chieftain Dorji Wangdeng and the rebels, both sides suffer many casualties. In order to capture Jianzan, Saducuo deceives Wocuoma with the message that their mother is about to die and suggesting she come to Bulongde Palace, where she kills her with a dagger.

Finally, a fire set by Saducuo consumes Bulongde Palace, and kills everyone in it, including Jianzan and Duoqi Wangdeng. Saducuo is now alone and has control over great wealth, but feels no happiness. Full of grief and regret, she atones for her misdeeds by giving alms to those in need and by circumambulating a sacred mountain.

Jianzan and the other Khams men were the heroes in the turbulent time of the Chieftains. Jianzan's mission to kill Wengzha Duoqi Wangdeng and avenge his parents gradually becomes a goal to overthrow the rule of the chieftains and the aristocrats - a rule shared by many Khams men. Resembling Khams men, the female characters in Liangjong Langsa's works display both masculine and feminine attributes. They have strength, determination, and independence in tandem with compassion and grace.

The novel's female characters also feature Wengzha Duoji Wangdeng's wife, Silang, who assisted her husband in maintaining the chieftain's palace. She shows sympathy to underlings, empathy that is similar to the Caravan Chief's lover, a weaver named Songjicuo, who shows motherly love for the young caravan men. Finally, an unnamed pregnant serf in Mantuya displays an impressive ability to bear pain as she delivers a baby as a foreman kicks and whips her.

Readers might find the early chapters of the novel somewhat slow paced and confusing. However, after Jianzan reveals his connection with the former Wengzha Chieftain Alun Jiebu in Chapter Eight, the previous chapters come into focus.

Characterization of the protagonist is done well. Periodically, readers visualize a naïve little boy confronting difficulties and obstacles after his escape from Wengzha Chieftain Duoji Wangdeng for about six years. Once he becomes Jianzan, readers visualize a brave, intelligent young man planning revenge and opposing those in power on behalf of the weak. Furthermore, the brief description of each chapter and the quotes from various Tibetan literary works instead of titles give each chapter a fresh perspective, and remind readers of traditional Tibetan moral teachings.

The English translation - *The Oath of Polungde* - by Pomroy and Dong Rui differs from the Chinese original in several ways. A brief description of each chapter in "Contents" and the quotes at the beginning of each chapter have been replaced with a very brief title giving the main topic of the chapter. Moreover, the names of the people and places in the English version are written in a non-Wylie Romanized form of Tibetan.<sup>1</sup>

The English translation of this novel retells the story in the process of the plots as in the Chinese version. The songs have been translated to present meaning and also rhyme. Some effort to present people and place names in a Tibetan context is also evident, e.g., Nyima (Nima), Gyapo (Jiebu), and Tsega (Zega). Nevertheless, the elimination of the titles of the chapters and the quotes presented at the top of each chapter as presented in the Chinese language version,

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<sup>1</sup> For example, "Gyaltsen" is used for "Bulongde Shiyan," rather than the Wylie "Rgyal mtshan."

weakens the moral intention of the novel and alters the author's unique way of presenting the novel. The English version would also have benefitted from careful copyediting, which would increase the book's appeal to an international, English-literate readership.

Liangjiong Langsa's focus includes ordinary people as well as chieftains. Moreover, Liangjiong Langsa's female characters in *Bulongde Shiyan* have important roles. Their existence and voices are witnessed and heard. Saducuo, for instance, rules and makes decision on behalf of her father as he recovers from serious injury.

*Bulongde Shiyan* is well worth reading for those with an interest in Tibetan chieftains, social issues in Khams Tibet in the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), and more generally, to those with an interest in Tibetan history and culture, and the production of literature by Tibetan women writers in China in the early twenty-first century. The novel has made noteworthy contributions in terms of Tibetan history and related social issues, as well as rich contextualization of female and male protagonists.

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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'gro ba bzang mo འགྲོ་བ་བཟང་མོ།

A Lai 阿莱

a mdo ཨ་མདོ།

bod kyi zlos gar chen mo brgyad བོད་ཀྱི་ལྗོས་གར་ཆེན་མོ་བརྟུན།

bodhisattva, byang chub sems dpa' བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔལ།

bstan 'gyur བསྟན་འགྱུར།

Bulongde 布隆德

Bulongde Shiyan 布隆德誓言

Chen'ai Luoding 尘埃落定

Dalai Lama 达赖喇嘛

Danzhu'er 丹珠尔

dbus gtsang དབུས་གཙང་།

don yon don 'grub རོན་ཡོན་རོན་འགྲུབ།

dri med kun ldan རྩི་མེད་ཀུན་ལྡན།

Duoji Wangdeng 多吉旺登

Ganzi 甘孜

Gesar, ge sar གེ་སར།

gling གླིང་།

gzugs kyi nyi ma གཟུགས་ཀྱི་ཉི་མ།

Hengduan 横断

Huihong Qiannian Chama Gudao 恢宏千年茶马古道

Jiang Xiuying 蒋秀英

Jianzan 坚赞

khams ཁམས།

Langji 郎吉

Langze 郎泽

Lariga 拉日嘎

Liang jiong · lang sa 亮炯·朗萨

Maikaxi Hegu 麦卡西河谷

Mantuya 曼图亚

Mei Yu Chou 美与丑

Meizhuo 梅卓

mi la ras pa མི་ལ་རས་པ།

mkha' mo rgyal མཁའ་མོ་རྒྱལ།

Nima 尼玛



pad ma 'od 'bar པད་མ་འོད་འབར།

phyur ba ཕུར་བ།

Qing 清

Qingchen 清晨

Qingji Sangde'er 情祭桑德尔

rgyal mtshan རྒྱལ་མཚན།

rnal 'byor gnam sa རྣལ་འབྱོར་གནས་ས།

Saducuo 萨都措

Sangpei Luobu 桑佩罗布

Sangpeiling 桑佩岭

Sichuan 四川

Silang 丝琅

snang sa 'od 'bum སྤང་ས་འོད་འབུམ།

Taiyang Buluo 太阳部落

Tasen 塔森

tsang dbyangs rgya mtsho ཨངས་དབྱངས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།

vajra, rdo rje, རྡོ་རྗེ།

Wenchen 文成

Wengzha 翁扎

Wengzha Alun Jiebu 翁扎阿伦杰布

Wocuoma 沃措玛

Xirao Huofo 西饶活佛

Xu Meiheng 徐美恒

Xunzhao Kangba Hanzi 寻找康巴汉子

Yixi Zhuoma 益希卓玛

Yueliang Yingdi 月亮营地

Zega 泽尕

Zeren Changzhu 泽仁昌珠

Reviewed by Wu Jing 吴晶 (Shaanxi Normal University 陕西师范大学)



Baima Nazhen 白玛娜珍. 2002. *Lhasa hong chen* 拉萨红尘 [*Love in Lhasa*]. Xizang renmin chubanshe 西藏人民出版社 [Tibet People's Press]. 295 pp. ISBN 7-223-01433-4/I-341 (paperback 16RMB).



Pema Nordrun (James Yongue and Wan Jiahui, translators). 2016. *Love in Lhasa*. Beijing: Chinese Translation Publishing House. 260 pp. ISBN 978-7-5001-4337-6 (paperback 35RMB).

Baima Nazhen (Pema Nordrun, Pad+ma nor sgron བདེ་མ་ནོར་སྒྲོན་) is a contemporary Tibetan female writer. Born into an educated family, she studied art and media studies at the People's Liberation Army Art Academy and School of Journalism and Communication in Chongqing. Having engaged in a wide range of jobs from dancer, journalist and news presenter, to choreographer-director, she currently works at the Tibet Writers' Association, concentrating on writing and creation. Her publications include a prose collection - *The Colors of Life* (1997), two collections of poetry - *On the Horizon of the Soul* (1999) and *Moonlight in Tibet* (2013), and two novels - *Love in Lhasa* (2002) and *Resurrected Tara* (2006). She is also active on her micro-blog (<http://bit.ly/2yTr9fb>).

Baima left home for inland China boarding schools at the age of eleven after which she did not live with her parents and siblings in Tibet. Her personal life experiences of witnessing cultural clashes between Tibetan tradition and inland urbanization and industrialization has greatly influenced her writing. Her novels tend to portray independent and rebellious Tibetan women endowed with cultural sensitivity and tortured by internal conflict between attachment to the good old past and an aspiration to merge into a brand-new world.

Baima's narrative perspectives and prose-like language differentiates her from many female writers in terms of her writing style. She has expressed admiration for such Western writers as Marguerite Duras (1914-1996), Milan Kundera (b. 1929), Henry Miller (1891-1980), and Karl Marx (1818-1883) (Hu 2013). Her wide reading has influenced her writing in terms of an awakened feminist consciousness and bold depictions of eroticism and sexual relationships. Her writing features both Tibetan religious sacredness and modern human vulgarity. Not only primal animism and union between man and nature are aesthetically portrayed, but also the feminine desire for sexual equality and spiritual love in inter-cultural scenarios is emphasized through forthright depictions of sex and poetic descriptions of romance. Her novels offer a feast for the readers as they approach Tibetan women's lives and love, to see and better understand their inner worlds.

Baima, as a second-generation Tibetan female writer in the twentieth century, filled the void of "female voices" in the Tibetan literary and historical discourses with her female characters, projecting rebellion against the highly patriarchal and male-dominated writings of the past. In this sense, Baima and her works are a significant contribution to ethnic literature in China.

As might be expected, her novels have drawn considerable academic interest and have been translated into English, Mongolian, Uyghur, and Tibetan. James Yongue and Wan Jiahui provide an English translation (2015) of *Lhasa hong chen*. Although this English version features numerous grammatical mistakes, textual mistranslations, and contextual misunderstandings, it is a laudable attempt to introduce Tibetan literature to English readers and is also of referential value for critics and other translators. A more careful proofreading might well lead this English version to more readers, better marketing, and greater achievement in cultural bridging.

Published in 2002, *Love in Lhasa* is Baima's first novel. The background is the 1980s at a time when China was engaging in fast-paced development of industrialization and commercialization as part of the Reform and Opening Up that began in the late 1970s. Most of the novel's episodes are set on the Tibetan Plateau where local Tibetans are affected by the trend of modernization. Young people in particular

have increased opportunities to go out and see the world and also experience more challenges in dealing with issues of self-identity, and exploring the meaning of their existence. Against such a fast-changing social background, Tibetan women are faced with poignant life choices, especially as compared to traditional women.

The novel's plot unfolds with the parallel life trajectories of the two female characters, Langsa and Yama, who are classmates and close friends at Tibet Military College. After graduation, the two young women leave the army and work in non-military areas as nurses. Langsa, the narrator, falls in love with a pilgrim, Varma, who comes from an isolated part of Tibet where Tibetan, Hui, and Han nationalities live together. They enjoy their otherworldly, extremely romantic relationship, and in the end, choose to live a reclusive life in the unknown hinterlands of Tibet.

In contrast, Yama, the heroine, undergoes more complicated love experiences. Yama is the focus of this novel, embodying qualities of a "lost girl," such as beauty, rebelliousness, freedom-loving, desire, dreamer, degradation, and despair. After a pre-marriage affair with Di, a young Han man, she marries Zedan, a Tibetan, and her first real love. Disappointed by domestic life, she succumbs to temptation and has an extra-marital affair with Xu Nan in Shanghai.

During her work shift, the erotic and siren-like Yama has a fling with a young, anonymous Tibetan admirer, which results in the death of a patient whose intravenous injection she should have been attending to. Yama's chaotic story ends when she amicably divorces Zedan and focuses on her career.

Yama represents young, educated Tibetan women who make wrong choices when engaging with the modern world and then bear the bitter consequences of abortion, betrayal, and despair. All the male characters in Yama's orbit are realistic and bound to a sort of fatalism amid the torrents of social transformation. Zedan, for example, falls into the trap of commercialization as tourism booms in Tibet. Lost in a "modern" lifestyle, he begins to associate with prostitutes while managing a business and making money.

Di, a young Han man, came to Tibet in the 1980s when the government encouraged young college graduates to go to Tibet to contribute their youth. Love between this pair from different ethnic

backgrounds is enchanted and fragile. Yama chooses to marry Zedan when he returns to Tibet while Di marries an uncouth Han woman from the countryside.

The third male character, Xu Nan, was a thief and orphan in the army. His yearning for love resembles that of a child crying for maternal care. Yama is sympathetic. Feeling desperate in her married life, she applies for a one-year exchange program in Shanghai and lives with him. However, shabby living conditions and the hustle and bustle of life in a metropolis prove intolerable for Yama and she quits her lover as well as Shanghai.

Compared to the narrator, Langsa is loyal and devoted to her soulmate and lover, Varma. In contrast, Yama is unable to find her place in life. The more she anchors the meaning of her life in love, the more desperate she becomes.

I now want to discuss characterization in this novel. The vivid and detailed depictions of the two young women's inner worlds and surrealistic portrayals of their dreams and fantasies are bound to stir the reader's complex emotions toward young, well-educated Tibetan women.

The novel's publication has encouraged vigorous discussion, e.g., Bai (2008) comments that "this novel depicts the existential fact of modern Tibetan intellectual<sup>1</sup> women from multiple dimensions and various angles" (73). Xu (2011) interprets the novel as a model of "bold and enthusiastic expression of feminist consciousness, pious religious affection, and mysterious religious baptism" (47) and awakening of "sexual consciousness, subject consciousness, modern consciousness" (48) of Tibetan women. Xu (2015) also notes Yama's "vagina worship" (19) - Yama's pride in her feminine charms - that goes hand in hand with anxious concern over the brevity of youth, which incites her hedonistic indulgence.

Pubu Changju (2010) writes:

Baima Nazhen's works engage the process of social and cultural transformation of Tibet since its peaceful liberation, and have introduced

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<sup>1</sup> The term "intellectual" refers to "educated elites" and may include professionals who are educated in a certain area of knowledge (Li 2015:5).

new artistic figures into the contemporary literary stage - 'dreamers' of the time... There are a group of women in modern Tibetan society who have not fully recognized the value of traditional culture and fail to establish a new knowledge structure so they are depressed with a sense of emptiness of being in a void between two cultures (138).

Zhaxi Dawa (2002) writes that "this is a novel exploring the experience of modern Tibetans searching for a spiritual home" and "all the characters are interpreting the same theme - the loss, search, and re-building of home" (74). Zhaxi Dawa convincingly compares Yama's growth as an experience of contractions: "Since an abortion during her adolescence, she is doomed to suffer from contractions. She is brave, upright, simple-minded, and rebellious. Her life track is a symbolic search - salvation - contraction." (74)

Xu (2011) writes that "Baima is sympathetic to her female characters, not only portraying their physical desires, but also emphasizing their spiritual pursuits" (90) and, furthermore, that the novel demonstrates the author's confusion about where women should go - is it pursuit of a career or religious reclusiveness? (91)

Baima's narrative mode has also been commented on. Bai (2008) suggests that the author created a unique narrative mode, combining a female/feminist narrative and social narrative, integrating folk narrative and national narrative. Baima did not write the stories chronologically. Instead, she employs a style of fragmented plot and stream of consciousness. Two narrators - the omniscient third person narrator and Langsa - alternate in relating the episodes in a total of twenty-seven chapters. Langsa, in the omniscient narrator's role, is more objective, as Baima's confidant and soul-mate. She becomes more subjective and sensational when she takes over the narration and resumes her expression of admiration for her lover, Varma, and the divergent life path Yama chose.

Baima selected a woman as the observer and commentator for another woman as the observed and narratee, revealing her unique feminist perspective and modernist writing style. Baima also inserted some magical-realistic narrative in dealing with romance and sexual indulgence, e.g., Yama's hallucinations of genitals and her female leader becoming a demon ingesting men's semen. Another memorable

scene is Yama's nightmare of Xiaofu - a dead neighbor and adulterer who committed suicide. Xiaofu becomes a frightening aberration who cries desperately. Yama then notices a giant penis among the swaying tree shadows. This penis then becomes her own penis, which she uses to pierce the eyes of her supervisor. Love and death are haunting motifs throughout the novel. The text alternates between realistic and magical-realist and never bores the reader.

Also, of note is the employment of narrative perspective featuring vivid depictions of animal images, for example, dogs, cattle, birds, chickens, lambs, crabs, owls, flies, and horses, suggesting an animistic, pantheist spirit in tandem with karmic relationships and animal reincarnation after death. The employment of these images enhances the prose-like artistic effect, strengthening the contrast between "worldly" and "unworldly" scenarios. Songs and poems help convey the characters' emotions related to human relationships and veneration of nature. A good example of this is the novel's ending with Langsa finishing her story with a poetic stanza (292):

ah, I am a tender trap  
 is every single fraud  
 interwoven with illusions  
 are you shuffling in between for me  
 I am a pond of dead water still for the ages  
 silent every day  
 with passion frozen  
 will you transform to a high snow mountain for me  
 yet love is like a cold sword  
 heart split fiercely  
 will your holy lotus  
 blossom a fiery spring  
 for my flaming lips on flame<sup>1</sup>

This novel is well worth the reader's time. Literary critics as well as those interested in modern Tibetan local life will find it merits multiple readings.

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<sup>1</sup> My translation.

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## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Baima Nazhen 白玛娜珍

Di 迪

Langsa 朗萨

Lhasa, Lasa 拉萨

pad+ma nor sgron བཅའ་མ་ནོར་སྒྲོན།

People's Liberation Army Art Academy, Jiefangjun yishu xueyuan 解放军艺术学院

School of Journalism and Communication in Chongqing, Chongqing  
xinwen xueyuan 重庆新闻学院

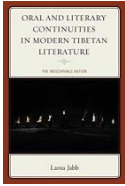
Varma, Guanerma 莞尔玛

Xu Nan 徐楠

Yama 雅玛

REVIEW: *ORAL AND LITERARY CONTINUITIES IN MODERN  
TIBETAN LITERATURE: THE INESCAPABLE NATION*

Reviewed by Séagh Kehoe (*University of Nottingham*)



Lama Jabb. 2015. *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature: The Inescapable Nation*. London: Lexington Books. ix + 277. Acknowledgements, index, bibliography, index, biography. ISBN 978-1498503334 (hardback 95.00USD; electronic 90.00USD).

*Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibet: The Inescapable Nation*, Lama Jabb's contribution to *Studies in Modern Tibetan Culture* series, is the first book-length study in English to center the literary, cultural, and political roots of modern Tibetan literature. Written by Lama Jabb, born and raised in a herding community in Amdo and now a junior research fellow in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies at the University of Oxford, this ambitious landmark study offers an in-depth and meticulously researched examination of the persistence of Tibet's artistic and oral traditions in the literary creativity of the present. Spanning a wide-range of oral and literary texts, the book also draws attention to the deep and untiring concern for the Tibetan nation across modern Tibetan writing.

The book is neatly organized into seven chapters, along with acknowledgements, an extensive bibliography, index, and short biography of Lama Jabb himself. In 277 pages, it moves gracefully across a diverse and skillfully interwoven set of discussions of Tibetan music, the Tibetan tradition of social criticism, cultural traumas, the Third Generation of Tibetan poets, and contemporary Tibetan erotic poetry, all the while spotlighting literary legacies and the persistent preoccupation for with the Tibetan nation in modern Tibetan literature.

In the Introduction, Lama Jabb contextualizes his argument in what he notes to be a pervasive approach to modern Tibetan literature

that emphasizes the 1980s as its point of "'birth'." While acknowledging that the relatively liberal policies adopted by the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Chinese Communist Party Congress in 1978 led to a watershed moment in modern Tibetan literature, Lama Jabb problematizes the scholarly preoccupation with rupture and fissure that so often obscures and neglects the enduring legacies and continuity of traditional literary and oral forms. Using several examples of the ways in which *mgur*,<sup>1</sup> Indic poetics, Tibetan literary greats such as Gedun Choepel (1903-1951), and oral traditions, he demonstrates that these traditional forms continue to influence Tibetan writing today. Moreover, he also highlights the overwhelming concern with history, language, culture, and religion as a major theme in modern Tibetan literature.

Chapter Two examines modern Tibetan music and national identity. Lamenting the scholarly preoccupation with Tibetan Buddhism and the consequential neglect of contemporary Tibetan culture, Lama Jabb notes that popular songs have been an important channel for voicing both dissent and Tibetan patriotism under difficult political circumstances. He begins with a pithy and incisive discussion of nationalism. Critical of the highly state-centric approach of modernists, Lama Jabb opts for Anthony D Smith's (1939-2016) understanding of nationalism as "a collective cultural phenomenon" built on history, culture, music and literature, lived experience and so on (32). Through his close reading of contemporary song lyrics across three songs in the *dunglen* genre, he examines the various ways in which these modern musical forms fuse melodies with literary and vernacular language to narrate the Tibetan nation.

In Chapter Three, Lama Jabb explores the critical legacy of the Tibetan tradition of social criticism in modern Tibetan literature. Beginning with a brief outline of Tibet's critical tradition in which he details the influence of traditional Tibetan literary figures, *mgur*, and proverbs, Lama Jabb then delves into oral genres, focusing on the examples of the great Tibetan Gesar epic and romantic balladry. These, he notes, are particularly enduring elements of social criticism, whose

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<sup>1</sup> *Mgur* denotes a type of Tibetan poem-song about spiritual experience or realization that may be oral or written in style.

influence continues to vividly manifest itself in the work of contemporary writers. In line with the central argument of the book, this chapter emphasizes the on-going and dynamic interplay between traditional Tibetan orality and modern literary creativity, and the importance of appreciating the artistic legacies of the past in the present.

Chapter Four examines the narration of cultural trauma in modern Tibetan literature and fiction. Focusing on Tsering Dhondup's novel *The Red Wind Screams*, Lama Jabb explores how the traumatic experiences in the early years of the People's Republic of China manifest themselves in modern Tibetan literature. He demonstrates how metaphors such as "red wind" and "wild yak" serve as "unifying imageries" for those who experienced those years, as well their descendants. These images serve to narrate the tragedy and horrors of the 1950s in a way that eclipses the radar of censors, while also reinforcing Tibetans' sense of collective identity. Keen to emphasize the ways in which oral narratives inform and shape these materials and contextualize contemporary artistic works, Lama Jabb also provides a summary of his mother's account of her tribe's encounter with the People's Liberation Army in 1958.

Chapter Five offers a fascinating overview of the emergence, development, and even partial demise of the Mi rabs gsum pa 'Third Generation' of Tibetan poets. Founded in 2005, this literary group distinguishes themselves from other authors of modern Tibetan poetry through their non-conformist, rebellious literary attitude that celebrates individuality, criticizes both traditional and colonial authority, and claims to abandon traditional forms of poetry. Yet, as Lama Jabb persuasively argues through his skillful analysis of several poems, particularly those of Kyabchen Dedrol and Dhatsanpo, while the Third Generation demonstrate a great deal of creativity, innovation and even subversion, their work nonetheless fails to escape both Tibetan literary legacies and a collective concern for the Tibetan nation.

In the final empirical chapter of his book, Lama Jabb explores the degree to which contemporary Tibetan erotic poetry can be said to be novel. Recent years have seen a proliferation of Tibetan erotic poetry, much to the alarm of traditionalists. Yet as Lama Jabb demonstrates, though contemporary erotic poems are relatively

graphic and detailed, themes of sex, passion, and love are far from a modern phenomenon in Tibetan literature. Exploring a range of literary materials from Kāvya poetry<sup>1</sup> to popular songs that fuse both literary and oral sources, he demonstrates the enduring legacies between past and present while also acknowledging some distinctive features of erotic Tibetan poetry today.

In his closing chapter, Lama Jabb reiterates his central argument - the necessity of appreciating "the persistence of Tibet's artistic past and living traditions in the creativity of the present" (231). Though also celebrating creativity and innovation in modern Tibetan poetry, Lama Jabb calls for more attention to the intertextuality and creative interplay at work across Tibetan writing as well as an awareness of the dangers of a scholarly preoccupation with moments of rupture and clear-cut distinctions between tradition and modern. He also highlights once more the centrality and indeed inescapability of the Tibetan nation as both a source of pride and pain as an enduring literary theme.

While this book demonstrates Lama Jabb's impressive and masterful grasp of Tibetan literary scenes both past and present, two points of shortcoming are worth noting. Firstly, though Lama Jabb openly criticizes what he argues to be the "male-dominated Tibetan literary culture where women as author, reader, and imaginative characters are totally marginalized" (199), very little reference to the work of female Tibetan writers is made in his book.

Though it may perhaps extend beyond the scope of the book, a second point concerns the influence of Chinese literary trends. For instance, the Third Generation bears striking similarities to the "Lower Body" (Ch. Xia ban shen) movement in China, both of which emerged in the early part of the twenty-first century. With both movements spurning literary legacies, emphasizing the here-and-now, and showing a strong tendency for courting taboo topics such as sex and desire, it would be worth considering how and why this overlap came to be.

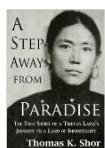
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<sup>1</sup> Kāvya refers to an Indic literary tradition that is characterized by its rich and lavish use of figures of speech, metaphors, and similes.

These two very minor observations notwithstanding, this book is a stunning piece of research that offers fresh and invaluable insights into the world of modern Tibetan literature. Lama Jabb is to be commended for his unparalleled command of Tibetan oral and literary works, as well as his rich, innovative, and thought-provoking analysis. A beautifully written and highly accessible read, this book was simply a pleasure to read and is recommended to anyone with an interest in modern Tibetan literature.

REVIEW: *A STEP AWAY FROM PARADISE*

Konchok Gelek (Dkon mchog dge legs) རྟོག་མཆོག་དགེ་ལེན། (Gengqiu Gelai 更求格来), Department of Geography, University of Zurich



Thomas K. Shor. 2012. *A Step Away from Paradise: A Tibetan Lama's Extraordinary Journey to a Land of Immortality*. [Kindle version]. ASIN Boo6TRoY7W (7.03USD); ISBN 0999291890 (paperback 19.95USD).

Tulshuk Lingpa was a visionary, and true visionaries are rare on this planet. They are able to bring down into form the great hopes and aspirations of us all. Think of a great musician or poet. They can capture in a few lines or notes the essence of what it means to be human. Everybody longs for wholeness. Why else do people search, be it for enlightenment or love.

– Thomas Shor<sup>2</sup>

Born in the USA, Thomas Shor travels in mountain regions, takes photographs, and writes about his experiences. He has authored *Windblown Clouds* (2003) and *The Master Director* (2014).<sup>3</sup> The title under review focuses on Tulshuk Lingpa<sup>4</sup> (Brtul zhugs gling pa, 1916-1962), a charismatic *terton* 'treasure revealer', who claimed to be able to open the hidden land - Beyul Demoshong.

The author was fascinated by the account of Tulshuk Lingpa's disciple, Dorje Wangmo, a Bhutanese nun and a disciple who abandoned her worldly possessions to pursue the land of dreams and imagined paradise. The author dug deeper by interviewing Kungsang, Tulshuk Lingpa's son, and other key disciples who were participants in the search of the same hidden realm on the slope of a glacier. Elements of this tale resemble magical realism with its narration detailing participants' experiences of magic, a parallel world, and a portal to the hidden land. The story centers on a continuing search for locating this

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Konchok Gelek. 2018. Review: *A Step Away from Paradise*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:346-350.

<sup>2</sup> <http://bit.ly/2Eu5WxI>, accessed 26 November 2017.

<sup>3</sup> <http://thomasshor.com/Books.htm>, accessed 15 October 2017.

<sup>4</sup> <http://bit.ly/2005HQM>, accessed 4 October 2017.

paradise with each step holding the possibility of drawing nearer to the destination. This holds readers' curiosity to the end.

In 1962, Tulshuk Lingpa led 300 followers from Sikkim and Bhutan to an adjacent area along the Nepal-Sikkim border. He then took a few close disciples to Kangchenjunga,<sup>1</sup> a remote area located on the border between Sikkim and Nepal, and attempted to pass through a gate that he believed led to a heavenly place, paralleling our own existence. At that moment, an avalanche enveloped them, killing Tulshuk and injuring the two others with him.

To better understand Tulshuk, background about his title, his lineage, and his belief is useful. Tulshuk Lingpa was a *terton*,<sup>2</sup> literally, 'treasure revealer' or 'mine excavator'. According to the author, *lingpa* is a title for elite *terton*:

A lingpa is a special type of Tibetan Lama who has the capacity to find terma, or hidden treasures. That explains his second name, Lingpa. Tulshuk means crazy. He was named this when he was eight years old. So, he must have shown the signs even as a boy. Tulshuk also means changeable or mutable. So, someone with a tulshuk nature will say one thing in the morning, another thing in the afternoon, and contradict both by evening. So, if you translate his name, it is Crazy Treasure Revealer.<sup>3</sup>

The *terton* tradition is found in the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism that traces back to Padmasambhava/Guru Rinpoche<sup>4</sup> from India, credited with introducing tantric Buddhism into Tibet. Padmasambhava hid tantric scriptures and ritual objects in mountains, lakes, the sky, and even within certain people's minds to protect the Dharma when it was under attack, and appointed demons that had been subdued and spiritual beings as dharma-protectors to guard the hidden treasures until the time was ripe for their revelation.

Being a *terton* comes from a natural gift, an innate ability to find the hidden object. In the early twentieth century in a remote region of Golok, Tibet, Tulshuk Lingpa demonstrated this quality while

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<sup>1</sup> <http://bit.ly/2sIhlAI>, accessed 4 October 2017.

<sup>2</sup> <http://bit.ly/2Bleoyx>, accessed 15 October 2017.

<sup>3</sup> <http://bit.ly/2Eu5WxI>, accessed 26 November 2017.

<sup>4</sup> <http://bit.ly/2EudG2F>, accessed 15 October 2017.



very young. He grabbed a *phurba*, a ritual dagger with a pointed three-edge blade,<sup>1</sup> from the empty space of air above him in front of monk novices and his teacher.

Tulshuk Lingpa's father was also a *terton* with two wives, a common practice among *lingpa*. The second wife was a dakini 'sky goer', a female embodiment of enlightened energy, intermediaries between the hidden land and *lingpa*.

In the 1930s, when Tulshuk Lingpa was teaching at a monastery adjacent to Chongay Town in Central Tibet, he met Phuntsok Choeden from a nearby household. They fell in love and ran away together to India. While on pilgrimage to places that Padmasambhava had once visited, they found themselves in a Himalayan region of India. Tulshuk Lingpa used his knowledge of herbal medicine in tandem with ritual and magic to treat the local people. He was then invited to a monastery in the Pangi Valley in the Chamba District in India, where he lived for fifteen years.

At times Tulshuk acted insanely, was unpredictable, contradicted his own statements, and often drank. Nevertheless, his ability to locate *ter* proved he was a *terton*. For example, one night when he was drunk while circumambulating a temple, he ordered his disciples to smash a wall of the temple, revealing a scroll with some writing that only a *terton* could decipher. He later produced two books of some 300 pages each based on his interpretation of this *ter*.

His fame grew in the Pandi Area in the west Himalayan region of India and he acted as a judge when there were local disputes. When well-armed Muslims entered the adjacent village, Kaan, people feared that Pandi would be the next target. Tulshuk Lingpa performed a ritual to stop the intrusion, and then he and a few of his disciples went to Kaan Village, which seemed abandoned. In fact, anxious villagers were hiding inside their homes. The intruders had left. Villagers cheered with joy when they realized the invaders were gone, put garlands of flowers around his neck, and regarded Tulshuk Lingpa as their savior. To prevent a return of the invaders, Tulshuk Lingpa performed rituals for some days. The Muslims did not return.

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<sup>1</sup> A *phurba* is "a ritual dagger with a pointed three-edge blade, such as that held by the deity" (<http://bit.ly/2CchCju>, accessed 15 October 2017).

Residents of Simoling 'place of the female cannibal', Kaan's neighboring village, had a number of lepers. Locals believed that unknown creatures were feeding on people's flesh. Tulshuk Lingpa performed ten days of healing rituals and then ordered village men to fire their hunting rifles into the air to chase those demons to Afghanistan. Tulshuk believed the cause of the disease was that villagers cut trees that grew near springs. There were no new cases of leprosy after the ritual. Tulshuk Linpa's reputation continued to grow and many came to him for healing.

After his death, his body was cremated. Some of Tulshuk's followers returned to a more ordinary normal life while others continued their spiritual journey. Wangchuk, a sponsor of Tulshuk Lingpa, asserted that his grandson was the incarnation of Tulshuk Lingpa based on the boy's claims. The reincarnated boy beat his parents, used drugs, dropped out of school, lacked money to live, and eventually became a taxi driver. The author eventually meets the reincarnated Tulshuk Lingpa, Raju, who was in his late thirties and had a wife and two children.

The book features two story lines. One is the author's journey which describes what he sees, who he meets, what he hears, and where he goes. The other stream is the story of Tulshuk Lingpa, which is based on what the author learned over time. These two streams seem randomly interwoven, which may puzzle readers. Better organization, for example, putting events in chronological order, would have made a clearer, more easily understood story.

Those interested in "oriental mysticism," Buddhism, journeys to unknown worlds, and oral history collected from real people's lived experiences will find this book of great interest.

Don't listen to anybody. Decide by yourself and practice madness. Develop courage for the benefit of all sentient beings. Then you will automatically be free from the knot of attachment. Then you will continually have the confidence of fearlessness and you can then try to open the Great Door of the Hidden Place.

— Tulshuk Lingpa<sup>1</sup>

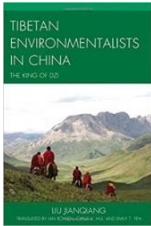
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<sup>1</sup><http://bit.ly/2Eu5WxI>, accessed 26 November 2017.



REVIEW: *TIBETAN ENVIRONMENTALISTS IN CHINA*

Reviewed by Bill Bleisch, PhD (China Exploration & Research Society)



Liu Jianqiang (Ian Rowen, Cyrus K Hui, and Emily T Yeh, translators) 2015. *Tibetan Environmentalists in China: The King of Dzi*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books. xxi + 327 pp, index. ISBN 978-0-7391-9973-2 (hardback 105USD) - ISBN 978-0-7391-9974-9 (electronic 103.35USD).

This translation is an edited and updated version of *Sky Beads - Tibetan Legends* <sup>2</sup> by Chinese journalist Liu Jianqiang, an accomplished investigative reporter (Fowler and Dean 2006; Shapiro 2016:126). The author began work on the book in 2006 when he was a visiting scholar at Peking University. He subsequently conducted a series of lengthy in-depth interviews with several remarkable individuals from various regions of Tibet - Tashi Dorje Hashi (Tador); Rukai Karma Samdrup (Karma) and his older brother, Rinchen Samdrup (Rinchen); Tsewang Gendun Denba (Gendun), Musuo Lobsang Tsundru (Musuo), and others. What may have begun for the author as an investigation of local Tibetan environmental activism soon became something very different and more interesting: an exploration of the "remarkable lives" of individuals who had chosen to play a vibrant part in shaping the present and future of their home. The book explores not only their activities and thoughts on environmental and cultural conservation, but how these were shaped by their pasts and their current beliefs. The narrative digs unabashedly into all aspects of their lives, successes and mistakes, commitments and doubts. There is even an entire chapter devoted to the most intimate details of their complicated love lives, remarkable for the honesty and openness of the interviews.

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Bleisch, Bill. 2018. Review: *Tibetan Environmentalists in China*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:351-359.

<sup>2</sup> *Tian zhu - zangren chuanqi* 天珠 - 藏人传奇.

While the main "protagonists" are all identified as environmentalists in the English title, it would be a mistake to consider them primarily as such. Most were involved with a broad range of endeavours: a monk, a painter, a musician, a spiritual adept, a businessman, a teacher, a party cadre. In fact, only one of them, Tador, dedicated himself full-time to addressing environmental protection. All share a dedication to grass-roots activism to promote Tibetan culture, environmental conservation, and rural development.

In the preface, the author provides an inside view of how he came to write this book, how he went about his research, and what his intentions were in its creation. The work grew out of a trip to Qinghai Province in July 2005 when the author was a reporter for the newspaper, *Southern Weekend*. This was when he first met Tador, the first Tibetan that he would come to know well, and his resolve to understand more about Tibetans grew out of this first meeting. As a visiting scholar at Peking University, he began conducting the detailed interviews for the book in an effort to record the real lives of several remarkable Tibetans. An appendix provides interview times and locations. Brief biographies are provided of the five "protagonists" and other prominent figures who appear in the book. This is followed by an introduction, which begins with a lively anecdote in which we first meet Karma during an almost comic incident of the loss and restoration of a fortune in antique *dzi* beads. This is also the reader's first introduction to different conceptions of fate and karma, a recurrent theme throughout the book.

Chapter One: Seeking Buddha, outlines the very different childhoods of Karma and Tador, using their stories to introduce some of the basic elements of Tibetan history and Tibetan Buddhism. Both lost their fathers when young and both were deeply affected by the historical changes swirling around them stirred by the Cultural Revolution, (1966-1976), which had profound impacts even in the most remote regions of the Tibetan plateau.

Despite prohibitions against religious practice during this time, Karma and his brother Rinchen were raised in the midst of their family's secret yet steadfast belief in Buddhism, particularly their devotion to Lama Changhub Dorje and later to his daughter, Ada Lhamo.

In contrast, Tador was raised by the village after his mother died. He received little exposure to Buddhism. He grew up as something of a wild child, but applied himself in school. It was there that he came to know a young teacher, Sonam Dargye, who would shape the rest of his life. The author skilfully ties the two stories together with his own by referencing the singular event of the death of Chairman Mao. At three PM Beijing time on September 18, 1976, Tador, Sonam, and the author, together with the entire nation, stood in widely distant spots in choreographed, simultaneous mourning.

In Chapter Two: Leaving Home, the reader learns more about Karma's formative years, his devotion to Buddhism and his decision to leave home and set out to make a fortune. "He would go to Lhasa, pray to Buddha and make big money" (64). Readers unfamiliar with Tibet may be introduced for the first time to certain Tibetan customs and beliefs, such as the carving of *mani* stones as an act of devotion, Dzogchen teachings, and polyandry, which was arranged by the family for Karma and his brother, Chime Namgyal. Rather than attempting to explain it in his own words, the author wisely chooses to introduce the strange and miraculous details of the life story of Dzogchen teacher, Changchub Dorje, with a long quotation from Lama Namkhai Norbu.

Chapter Three: Wasteland, abruptly picks up Tador's story again as he completes his education and returns to work first in Jyeku and then closer to his childhood home in Drido. He and his friends, Wangdrag, Tashi, and Gyaltsen, were the intellectuals of Drido at this time, and they quickly became active, forming the Awakening Society. The Society was soon closed down, but ten years later, Tador, Wangdrag, and Tashi would go on to establish the Upper Yangtze Organization, the first NGO for environmental protection on the Tibetan Plateau. Before long the four friends gave up their government jobs and became school teachers in order to try to introduce education reform, but when their efforts were stymied by the bureaucracy, they resigned their posts again.

Serendipitously, at that same moment, Sonam Dargye, by then a Deputy County Party Secretary, was looking for recruits for the Western Working Commission, an ad hoc government agency tasked with making plans for the remote western district of Suojia, an area of 50,000 square kilometres that included a vast no-man's land to the

west known as Kekexili. The Commission promptly discovered that outsiders were flocking into the region in a wild goldrush and began to resort to desperate measures to keep lawlessness out of Kekexili. By the mid-1990's, the poorly funded Commission also had to contend with a bloody massacre of Tibetan Antelope, as those hunting for fortune turned to another valuable resource of the region. Thus, it was that the Western Working Commission became an anti-poaching force, dedicated to the protection of the Tibetan Antelope. The subsequent history is well known, as the Commission, out-numbered and out-gunned, took on poachers in this remote wasteland, leading ultimately to the death of Sonam Dargye at the hands of poachers on January 18, 1994. Tador and the author provide unprecedented and harrowing details of that event.

The narrative then pauses, as Chapter Four: Love, provides an intimate window into the personal lives of the protagonists, detailing their often-complicated relationships with the opposite sex, which in three cases, flew in the face of tradition. Of particular interest are the accounts by two "fallen" monks, Rinchen and Gendun, both of whom left monastic life because of love. Karma and his wife-to-be also defied their families' traditions in order to marry.

Chapter Five: Seeking the Way, explores the deep conflict between the draw of spiritual life and the imperative the protagonists feel to take action to protect Tibetan heritage. This conflict is explored deeply through the story of Musuo and the other members of the Khawakarpo Cultural Society. Founded by Sonam Norbu, Tseli Nyima (Xiaoma) and colleagues to promote Tibetan language and culture, the Society only later came to environmental activism through its efforts to protect the ancient cypress trees on the slopes of the sacred mountain Khawakarpo in northwest Yunnan. It was Xiaoma who convinced Musuo, a musician and composer turned spiritual seeker, to return to secular life and join the Society:

Your hiding alone in the mountains to meditate is only for yourself; if you come out, you'll be serving all of us...The ethnic culture of Deqin is at the crossroads of life and death. You've got to take responsibility for the survival of our ethnic culture (189-190).

The chapter highlights the tension between Buddhist practise and activism in the secular world through Musuo's thoughts and struggles.

Chapter Six: *Running Away*, raises the tension by picking up Tador's story again after the death of Sonam Dorgye. Under suspicion, first by the police, and then by the community, Tador nearly succumbed to despair, but eventually recovered and returned to work, first as head of the county Information Bureau where he popularized Sonam Dargye's accomplishments. He continued as a member of the informal Beard Gang with Wangdrag and Tashi, dedicated to fulfilling Sonam Dargye's unfulfilled dreams of development for Suojia, with or without government support. It was at this time that the idea of an integrated ecological and economic zone along the headwaters of the Yangtze crystalized in Tador's mind. It was the subject of his graduation thesis at a (Communist) Party School in 1998, and then became the mission of the Upper Yangtze Organization, an organization started by three Tibetan cadres, and the first Tibetan environmental NGO to be recognized in China. Grassroots nature conservation was to be the core of their program for community development. As Tador summarizes it:

The government's method of protection is to establish bureaus and send police to relocate the people. Our wish is to establish nature reserves inside Tibetan areas, to let Tibetans and not police protect the environment (228).

In Chapter Seven: *Homecoming*, the author returns to Karma's story, covering the wild ride of his life as he rises and falls and rises again in business. By the summer of 1993, he was specializing in the buying and selling of antiques, and soon became successful and well-known as the "King of Dzi" after he famously cornered the world market in *dzi*, the valuable Tibetan sky beads of that name. Through his business as an antique dealer, Karma developed a passion for protecting culture. It is at this point in the book that Karma narrates more set-backs in his own words with the problematic "Xinjiang story" of 1998. The chapter then moves on to bring four of the protagonists together, as Karma enlists Tador to run the Snowland Great Rivers Environmental Protection Association, based in Yushu. They work jointly to support Karma's



brothers, Rinchen and Chime Namgyal, in protecting sacred mountains and holy lakes. In the remainder of the chapter and in Epilogue: Return to Lhasa, the views of all of the five protagonists on development, civilization and religion are revisited and probed deeply. The epilogue ends with the author musing nostalgically, regretting the modernization of Lhasa and the changes that are again swirling through Tibet, this time stirred by commercialization.

Perhaps some of the most moving and thought-provoking ideas in the book are expressed here, in a long quote from Tador about how he sees his role and the future. His mission is clear:

My job is to tell the indigenous people that they are the principals of this land. ... I do not advocate conflict between indigenous people against outsiders.... There's no need for antagonism. That would only result in tragedy (295).

But Tador does not hide his misgivings:

Now I've got lots of doubts about what I've accomplished in these years. How many have listened to me? What policy changes have I affected?... I ... wish I had unshakable faith like Karma and Rinchen [to] give me strength (298).

Tador, like his teacher and mentor Sonam Dargye, had little exposure to Buddhism when young, and his relationship with it is ambivalent even when it grows stronger later in his life. In contrast, the profound relationship that the other protagonists have with Buddhism motivates and directs their activities. And yet they also question and doubt the relationship between their religion and their activism. Karma notes "I came to realize that the protection of monasteries and Buddha statues alone cannot protect Tibetan culture" (293). At the same time, Buddhism challenges the relevance of conservation. Musuo quotes the adept Chime Dorje (Zhonghua) "Total dedication to the protection of culture carries little significance because sooner or later it'll disappear" (204). Musuo's involvement with protection and promotion of Tibetan culture was thus also ambivalent. As one of the most active members of the Khawakarpo

Cultural Preservation Society, he was deeply involved with their efforts to promote Tibetan culture and protect the environment in the region of Deqin in northwest Yunnan. Yet he wrestles with conflicts between his Buddhist studies and his secular life.

Similar struggles appear in the shorter sections covering the lives and activities of Rinchen and Gendun, both of whom were formerly ordained as monks, but returned to lay life because of love relationships. Their stories are intertwined with that of Karma's, who is by far the most complex and contradictory figure of the five. After his success in business, Karma became interested in Tibetan cultural artefacts and art and amassed an important collection with which he started a museum in Lhasa:

In my life, protection of culture is most important. Whether it is Chinese, Tibetan, Zhang Zhun or Persian, I want to protect it all. Everyone's enjoyment is different. What I enjoy most is the protection of culture (303-304).

Karma only later became interested in environmental conservation, and began actively supporting Tador, his brothers Rinchen and Chime Namgyal, and others in their efforts. What set Karma apart was his unshakable optimism and faith, which carried him through repeated set-backs and failures, including arrest and imprisonment. This faith may have been at the heart of Karma's resilience, as Tador points out:

The major difference between Karma, Rinchen and me is their faith and my lack of it.... I attended school and I'm a cadre who left my homeland. We who have attended school have lots of problems: small-minded cleverness, selfishness, too much concern for our own affairs, over-cautiousness and frustration. Karma isn't like that at all. He is characteristic of the working class: full of sincerity and generosity, happy whether the sky collapses on him or not, and relentless in pursuit of his goals, and accepting all setbacks (298).

Sadly, we learn in the postscript, written for this English language edition in December 2014 after the author took up a position as a visiting scholar at the University of California Berkeley, that

Karma was again imprisoned after the publication of the Chinese edition of this book, and sentenced to fifteen years in jail for crimes for which he had already been exonerated in a previous trial.

Throughout the book, we are constantly reminded that this is an exploration of Tibet and the various experiences of modern Tibetans written by an acknowledged outsider. It is written with a passion for accuracy and detail, and, as such, the Chinese edition would have been helpful in stripping away the imaginings of Tibet that befuddle most people's views inside China, providing them with a glimpse of a world far removed from the romanticized and demonized visions of Tibetans that thread through contemporary Chinese pop culture.

For most people, Tibet is only the Tibet of the imagination. The lives of the six million Tibetans have been neglected. Without seeing their faces or listening to their voices, there is no understanding of their real lives... I wanted to know the past of these people ... and, even more, I wanted to know how they create her present and her future (x).

With increasing insight, the author clearly succeeded; but he still cannot help but bring his own biases and imaginings to his writing. Inevitably, the book is often a personal exploration of the experiences of an outsider interacting with Tibetans in Tibet. It is most valuable and enlightening when the author backs away and lets his protagonists speak in their own words. While the author himself achieved a higher degree of understanding, it is not clear how successful this book has been in introducing Chinese readers to a different view of modern Tibetans. The Chinese edition was published only in Hong Kong and is not widely available in mainland China. The English edition will reach an even smaller audience there.

The author's motivations in writing this book were clear from the outset and are clearly stated in the preface: "I decided to write a book to record these remarkable lives and explore their souls, and perhaps, through them, explore my own soul" (x). Clearly, this personal journey was as important to the author as any expected impact the book might have had on understanding environmental protection or on perceptions of Tibetans by outsiders: "I may be a Han

Chinese, but what I was doing here in Tibet was no different than my local friends. I was finding my faith before seeking my future" (xxi).

In this deeply personal search, we can hope the author was successful, but at what cost? At the end, we are left with a haunting and complex image. Standing before the image of the Shakyamuni Buddha in the Jokhang Temple, the most sacred spot in all of Tibet, the author, with germinating faith, prays for greater personal wisdom. Tador, the doubter and sceptic, stands beside him. Yet he too prays, also in tears, first for others, and only then for himself, for the personal strength to carry on.

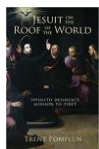
*Buddha, I pray for you to protect all lives on the Tibetan plateau, allowing them to coexist in harmony* (299).

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## REVIEW: *TRANSCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE HIMALAYAN BORDERLANDS - KALIMPONG AS A "CONTACT ZONE"*

Reviewed by Enrico Beltramini  
(Notre Dame de Namur University)



Markus Viehbeck (ed.), 2017. *Transcultural Encounters in the Himalayan Borderlands - Kalimpong as a "Contact Zone."* Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, viii + 350 pp, ISBN 978-3-946054-58-0 (paperback 55.37USD).

This volume is both a story of the hill station of Kalimpong, in the Eastern Himalayan region, and a study of transcultural dynamics seen through the prism of the local story of Kalimpong. A collaborative work, the book is the result of a conference that brought together various international scholars on the cultural history of Kalimpong. Scholars from Europe (Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Heidelberg, Manchester, Oxford, Roskilde), North America (Los Angeles, Toronto), Oceania (Melbourne), and India (Sikkim) met in Kalimpong 6-8 March 2015, to discuss the topic from a variety of disciplinary viewpoints, including social history, Tibetan studies, anthropology, ethnography, religious studies, and postcolonial literature. The publisher, Heidelberg University Publishing, has included this anthology in its prestigious Heidelberg Studies on Transculturality.

The history of Kalimpong, the other mountain town of Darjeeling and, more generally the entire Eastern Himalayan region, has been the focus of a specialized yet expanding scholarly field. Works center on Kalimpong (Hilker, 2005), Darjeeling (Besky, 2014; Sharma, 2011 and 2014; Warner, 2014), and the entire area of the Himalayan territories of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan, as well as parts of Northern-Eastern India (Huber and Blackburn, 2012; McKay, 2007; Mullard, 2011; Phuntsho, 2013; Shneiderman, 2015). In this context, scholars note how Kalimpong and Darjeeling shared the same destiny:

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Beltramini, Enrico. 2018. Review: *Transcultural Encounters in the Himalayan Borderlands - Kalimpong as a "Contact Zone"*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:360-363.

originally sparsely populated settlements in the foothills of the Himalayas, both villages were acquired in the nineteenth century by the English East India Company (Kalimpong was annexed in 1865 from the kingdom of Bhutan, and Darjeeling from the kingdom of Sikkim in 1835) to become British-ruled towns and ultimately hubs for commerce across British India, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, and China. Both cities showed a social hierarchical organization with colonial administrators, planters, and missionaries on top, and a wide range of settlers representing diverse Asian and Himalayan ethnicities, as well as British, German, French, and Scandinavian sojourners. Both cities would suffer in the post-colonial era from the rise of Asian nationalism, which has obstructed the once porous borders across Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, and India.

The book looks at the history of Kalimpong through the lens of "the encounter." In the colonial and early post-colonial era, this mountain space enabled a variety of encounters between (British) India, Tibet, and China; Nepal and Bhutan; Christian mission and Himalayan religions; and between global flows of money and information and local markets and practices. The town has operated as a "contact zone," i.e., a magnet attracting into the same zone (place) subjects previously separated by geographic and temporal disjuncture, *de facto* intersecting and modifying historical trajectories of circulation in this space. The aim of the book is "to investigate the Eastern Himalayan border region through new theoretical and conceptual approaches" (v). In particular, the approach is borrowed from the work of Mary Louise Pratt on travel writing in a colonial context (Pratt, 1992), in which general currents of cultural discourses are counterbalanced by an emphasis on the agency of individuals that might not follow the logic of these discourses.

The book is divided into four sections. The first, titled "Christian Mission, Educational Institutions, and Identity Formation," addresses the role played by Western missionaries, mostly Protestants, in turning a village into a border cosmopolitan town. Three essays investigate how Christian individuals and institutions came to Kalimpong in the second half of the nineteenth century, engaged with the indigenous population, operated in a Victorian evangelical style, and left an enduring mark on local culture. The second section, "Public

Sphere, Public Media, and the Creation of Public Knowledge," investigates the role of media in constructing public knowledge in public space of Kalimpong. Three articles study media (photography), interpretation (the gulf between the indigenous and the Western interpretations of the same phenomena), and geo-politics (the Chinese coverage of Kalimpong on Chinese media varies in accordance with the more general conditions of Sino-Indian political relations).

In the third section, "Things that Connect: Economies and Material Culture," the focus is on objects and activities operating as cultural artifact that stimulate transcultural connections. A piece covers the "gifting moments," the moment of encounter between dignitaries when gifts are exchanged; another addresses the trading economy, particularly the economy that emphasizes cross-cultural trade. Finally, a paper focuses on economic rituals "as a contact zone for peoples from diverse backgrounds manifests itself in the present-day marketing" (17).

The fourth section is titled "Scholars, Power, and Knowledge Production" and deals with the interactions between foreign and indigenous scholars in Kalimpong and the knowledge produced through such interactions. Three articles investigate the subject from the perspective of the foreigners and of the local scholars, who are operating in support of Western scholars and on their own. A paper studies how the interaction operates to either elevate certain local knowledge or to silence it. The last essay functions as an epilogue and connects the colonial and early post-colonial history of Kalimpong to present times.

*Transcultural Encounters* brings together an impressive number of local stories on, and global trends around, the transformation of Kalimpong from an obscure rural village to a cosmopolitan microcosm in the foothills of the Himalayas. The sources are impressive in their range - not limited to local sources but also reflective of archives and primary sources from former colonial powers. The book offers a nuanced, powerful narrative that represents an important addition to the scholarly literature on the Eastern Himalayan region.

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REVIEW: *MINDSCAPING THE LANDSCAPE OF TIBET*

Reviewed by Dorje Tashi (Rdo rje bkra shis རོ་རྒྱལ་པུ་ཤིས།,  
Duojie Zhaxi) University of Colorado-Boulder



Dan Smyer Yü. 2015. *Mindscaping the Landscape of Tibet: Place, Memorability, Ecoaesthetics*. Boston: Walter de Gruyter. 257 pp. ISBN 978-1-61451-553-1 (hardback 140USD), ISBN 978-1-61451-562-3 (paperback 42USD), ISBN 978-1-61451-423-7 (PDF 140USD), ISBN 978-1-61451-980-5 (EPUB 140USD).

Dan Smyer Yü's work (2015) is an important contribution to the field of Tibetan Studies and provides thought-provoking insights on Tibetan landscapes. A professor of anthropology at Yunnan Minzu University, Yü's research interests include trans-regional studies of ethnic relations, religious diversity, and Tibetan Buddhism in the Himalayas. Yü has also been involved in the production of documentary films about Tibet and Tibetan landscape, Buddhism, and culture.

In *Mindscaping the Landscape of Tibet*, Yü explores the potency of Tibetan landscape through the lens of post-Orientalism, with a focus on intimate interactions between place and people, and connections between landscape and mindscape. Containing extensive ethnographic descriptions and theoretical applications, Yü borrows Edward Casey's (b. 1939) concept of "placiality" as a conceptual tool, linking the "materiality and immateriality of place" (23) and exploring their manifestations.

The book features eight chapters, including introduction and conclusion chapters. The remaining six chapters are case studies carried out in Sambha (Sum ba), a Tibetan community in Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province; Beijing; Shangrila (Xiangelila, Sems kyi nyi zla, Rgyal thang), a Tibetan city in Bde chen (Diqing) Tibetan

Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province; and Lha sa. Also included are narratives of the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) arrival in Tibet in the 1950s, and analysis of the cinematic landscapes of Tibet, Tibetan intellectual critics of traditional Tibet, religious tourism, and public discourse between Tibetans and non-Tibetans.

The introduction (Chapter One) introduces the key concepts of the book, research sites, research methods, and the structure of the book. The final chapter of the book summarizes the main argument of the book, research findings, and revisits his theoretical perspectives. The concept of a mindscape is given as:

a range of reflexes, intellectual reflections, emotional responses, memories, moving images, and mental data storage of scents, colors, sounds, temperatures, and meteorological patterns, all of which originate from human lived experiences enveloped in the physical environment (20).

Drawing on James Gibson's (1904-1979) concept of affordance, Yü explores the relationship between individuals and the environment, examining how the placiality of Tibet speaks to both Tibetans and non-Tibetans when they enter and experience the landscape of cultural Tibet. Similarly, the eco-aesthetic approach is employed to emphasize the Tibetan landscape as "environmental art" (25), and to examine not only a deeper understanding of landscape itself, but also the deities and spirits that are embodied in landscape, as well as how Tibet and Tibetans are perceived, imagined, and represented among Tibetans and non-Tibetans. The remaining chapters aim to answer these issues by engaging in a series of ethnographic narratives.

In Chapter Two (Geopoetics of Place, Gods, and People in Sambha), Yü portrays himself as an outsider, centering his inquiry on an ethnographic case study of Sambha, a Tibetan village in Mtsho sngon, investigating the village's eco-aesthetic landscapes. Yü's detailed narratives of the historical features and cultural identities of sacred landscapes are coherent and informative. His exploration of the stunning landscapes in Sambha reminds him of the memories and reflections other non-Tibetans had of the Tibetan landscape, for instance, Lama Anagarika Govinda's (Ernst Lothar Hoffmann, 1898-1985) memory of the Tibetan landscape in the late 1940s, and

Alexandra David-Neel (1868-1969) and Walter Evans-Wentz's (1878-1965) affection for Tibet. This further emphasizes the impressive nature of the Tibetan landscape.

Through a close relationship with Aku Norbu (A khu nor bu), a local Tibetan tantric practitioner, Yü moves on to examine how Tibetan sacred landscapes (e.g., Sambhadrubgne, Sum ba grub gnas; Ami Megbon, A myes dmag dpon) are associated with deities and spirits, with attention to how local villagers perceive, understand, and interact with sacred landscapes. This results in revealing that landscapes are inhabited by not only people, but also by spiritual entities.

Similarly, Yü's ethnographic narratives of Amne Machen (A myes rma chen) in Chapter Six (Ensouling the Mountain), focuses on Tibetan sacred landscapes, describing the experiences of a pilgrimage to Amne Machen that Yü and his Tibetan and Han Chinese friends undertook. Particularly, Yü explores how Amne Machen, as one of the most prominent holy mountains of Tibet, symbolizes the cultural identity, and belonging to the native Tibetans, and how its harsh environmental conditions bring challenges to Han Chinese crew. For instance, he describes how a few of his Han Chinese crew members in Amne Machen suffered from altitude sickness.

Both chapters Two and Six suggest that the Tibetan sacred landscape is composed not only of physical features and unique eco-aesthetics as reflected by non-Tibetans, but also embraces cultural identity, local history, ancestral memories, religious significance, interrelationships and connections between place and people, and landscape and mindscape. Yü notes that the worship of sacred landscapes is a practiced across Tibetan areas, and Tibetan communities generally have at least one sacred mountain and related embodied deities.

Based on archival research, Chapter Three (Confessions of an Inner Liberation) analyzes journals, diaries, and memoirs written by PLA soldiers and officers in the 1950s. Yü addresses "the legacy of China's Old Tibet/New Tibet as two sides of the same ideological construct created by the Chinese state in the mid-twentieth century" (73). In so doing, he argues that the narratives of PLA propaganda officers and soldiers who participated in the "Second Long March" to Tibet are similar to those of Westerners such as Lama Anagarika

Govinda in that they feature positive eco-aesthetic memories of Tibet and Tibetan landscapes. This narrative challenges the Chinese state's perception of Tibet as *luohou* 'backward', *chuantong* 'traditional', or *mixin* 'superstitious'.

Chapter Four (Memorability of Place Among Anti-traditionalists) focuses on the works of Shogdong (Zhongs dung), a controversial contemporary Tibetan writer and cultural critic. Yü describes the ways in which Shogdong engages in an imagination of modern Tibet and anti-tradition, calling his writing as "a pathology of modernity" concerning "manifested pathos - the emotions, feelings, and pain - that arises as consequences of China's socialist modernity" (98). Yü differentiates Shogdong's imagined modern Tibet from that of Chinese Communist "modernity" by noting that:

Shogdong and like-minded Tibetans appear to be anti-traditionalists when they imagine a modern Tibet, not as a replica of socialist China, but as a new Tibet of their own with a true sense of equality (40).

In contrast, by focusing on the "pro-traditionalist" representation of Tibet, Chapter Five (Touching the Skin of Modern Tibet in the New Tibetan Cinema) explores how the landscape of Tibetan Buddhism in Pema Tsenden's (Pad+ma tshe brtan) films assists in linking the mindscape of spectators with the Tibetan landscape. Tibetan Buddhism in both *The Silent Holy Stones* (2005) and *The Grassland* (2003), directed by Pema Tsenden, plays a major role throughout the films that contain pictorial representations of the Tibetan landscape. Based on his ethnographic narrative, Yü examines how this cinematic Buddhist landscape links the mindscape of spectators with both the physical and cultural landscapes of Tibet. *The Search* (2009) and *Old Dog* (2011), portray the fast emergence of globalization and modernization in the landscape of Tibet, showing how the "spirituality of traditional Tibetan people in their ancestral land are replaced with images and (e)motions of loss, nostalgia, alienation, and desolation" (132). Yü's case study of Tibetan cinema suggests the interconnections between landscape and mindscape, showing that landscape is not only a physical thing seen with the eyes, but is also an ideology that is part of one's mindscape.

Chapter Seven (Drifting in the Mirages of the Tibetan Landscape) explores the ways in which Tibetan landscape in Shangrila constructs the mindscape of non-Tibetans, with a focus on a group of American scholars and students. To Yü, their visit to and interactions with the eco-aesthetics of the local landscape, e.g., spiritual landscapes such as the Drul Yelpa (Brag yer ba) Caves, strongly impact their mindscapes. He notes that visitors often spent "extra time at places where the natural landscape and human cultural elements were entwined" (186). Yü also provides a historical account of how the Chinese name Zhongdian changed into Shangrila in the late 1990s, and explains how the local economy developed due to the new brand name of Shangrila. In so doing, Yü argues that expansion of "tibetanization" in Shangrila was initiated by outsiders for the purpose of their commercial profit, rather than any concern with for the Tibetan language and culture. Yü, however, does not explain who these outsiders are.

Throughout the book, Yü argues for the inseparable interconnections between place and people, and landscape and mindscape. By emphasizing how memories, history, culture, religion, and identity are embodied in landscape, Yü claims that landscape is not only a physical thing, but also an ideological/symbolic process that has the power to (re) produce relationships among and between people.

Overall, the book succeeds in achieving its goal and it is well organized. His ethnographic narratives of Tibetan sacred landscapes in Sambha and Golok (Mgo log) in chapters Two and Six stand out. The exploration of these sacred landscapes further elucidates how memory, myths, and stories of the spirit-world exist in both human mindscapes and natural landscapes.

Yü is uniquely positioned to conduct this research in China. His linguistic competence in both Chinese and Tibetan gives him access to archives, journals, diaries, and memoirs in Chinese and Tibetan languages. His teaching experiences in Beijing, and his work experiences with both Tibetans and Han Chinese, particularly with such key informants as Pema Tsenden, a well-known Tibetan filmmaker, allowed him to conduct extensive fieldwork. In addition, although Yü is an outsider/non-Tibetan, given his extensive work experiences in Tibet, his close relationship with his informants, as well as his

linguistic competence, Yü is only a marginal outsider. This critical distance puts him in a unique position to develop a perspective that is critical and theoretically informed.

Yü's ethnographic narrative of Sambha Village and its landscapes brings me to the actual place he describes. I am from Brag dmar nang Village, which is about three kilometers from Sambha. I have personally experienced the specific landscape that Yü describes. For instance, I spent a great deal of time in the vicinity of Ami Megbon herding goats during my early childhood, as well as well Sambhadrubgne, which I see when I go to my home village from Khri ka County Town. Yü's work thus has a strong sense of authenticity for me.

Yü adroitly uses theories as analytical tools. However, at times his employment of theory is dense, interrupting the flow of his narratives. This reader wonders why maps and photographs of the sites he mentions, such as Amne Machen and the Drul Yelpe Caves, are not given. The use of Tibetan terminology throughout the book is problematic. There are no notes on Tibetan transliterations, nor on the names of places and people. It is reasonable to use phonetic transcription for an audience not literate in Tibetan, however, the phonetic transcription system that Yü employs is neither standard nor consistent, e.g., "*kle*" (33) and "*klu*" (60). In addition, most Tibetan words are given in Tibetan script throughout the book and some have errors, most likely due to font compatibility issues, e.g., "Guru Tsokye Dorje" (54), "*kyamashetoka*" (57), and "*sems rgyud*" (174). This emphasizes the value of including Wylie transliterations to preserve the original Tibetan spellings.

These criticisms, however, do not detract from the book's contributions in providing thoughtful new insights into the concept of landscape and Tibetan landscapes in particular. The book is well worth reading for those interested in Tibetan Studies, cultural anthropology, and cultural geography.

## NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Aku Norbu, a khu nor bu ཨ་སུ་ནོར་བུ།

Ami Megbon, a myes dmag dpon ཨ་མེས་དམག་དཔོན།

Amne Machen, a myes rma chen ཨ་མེས་མ་ཆེན།

bde chen བདེ་ཆེན།

Beijing 北京

brag dmar nang བླ་དམར་ནང་།

*chuantong* 传统

Diqing 迪庆

Dorje Tashi, rdo rje bkra shis དོར་ཇེ་བཀྲ་ཤིས།

Drul Yelpe, brag yer ba བླ་ཡེར་བ།

Duojie Zhaxi 多杰扎西

Golok, mgo log གོ་ལོག་ལོག་།

Guide 贵德

Guo luo 果洛

Guru Tsokye Dorje, gu ru mtsho skyes rdo rje གུ་རུ་མཚོ་ཕྱེས་དོ་རྗེ།

Hainan 海南

khri ka ཁྲི་ཀ།

kle, klu ལུ།

Kyamashetoka, rgya ma shi tho kha ལྷ་མ་ཤི་ཐོ་ཀ་མ།

lha sa ལྷ་ས། ལྷ་ས།

*luohou* 落后

minzu 民族

*mixin* 迷信

mtsho lho མཚོ་ལྷོ།

mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

Pema Tseden, pad+ma tshe brtan པདྨ་ཚེ་བརྟན།

Qinghai 青海

rgyal thang ལྷ་ས་ཐང་།

Sambha, sum ba ལུ་མ་པ།

Sambhadrubgne, sum ba grub gnas ལུ་མ་པ་གུབ་གནས།

sems rgyud སེམས་རྒྱུད།

Shangrila, Xiangelila, 香格里拉, sems kyi nyi zla སེམས་ཀྱི་ནི་ལྷ།

Shogdong, zhogs dung ཞོག་ས་དུང་།

Songba 松巴

Yunnan 云南

Zhemeang 者么昂

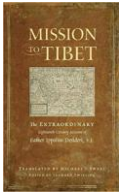
Zhongdian 中甸

*IPPOLITO DESIDERI; & A JESUIT'S QUEST FOR  
THE SOUL OF TIBET*

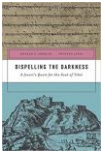
Reviewed by Enrico Beltramini (Notre Dame de Namur University)



Trent Pomplun. 2010. *Jesuit on the Roof of the World: Ippolito Desideri's Mission to Tibet*. New York: Oxford University Press, xvi + 302 pages, ISBN 978-0-19-537786-6 (hardback 29.95USD).



Michael J. Sweet (trans) and Leonard Zwilling (ed). 2010. *Mission to Tibet: The Extraordinary Eighteenth-Century Account of Father Ippolito Desideri, S. J.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, xxiv + 797 pages, ISBN 978-086171-676-0 (paperback 34.95USD).



Donald S. Lopez Jr. and Thupten Jinpa. 2017. *Dispelling the Darkness: A Jesuit's Quest for the Soul of Tibet*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 320 pages, ISBN 978-0-674-65970-4 (hardback 29.95USD).

These three contributions address the fascinating life and major works of Ippolito Desideri (1684-1733), an Italian Jesuit missionary who spent almost seven years in Tibet in the eighteenth century. There are two good stories here. The first is that of Desideri, who left Italy to establish a Jesuit mission on "the roof of the world" during the political upheaval of early eighteenth-century Tibet and the conflict between Jesuits and Capuchins within Roman Catholicism. The second is that of Desideri's writings, in both Italian and Tibetan: *Notizie storiche del Thibet e Memorie de' viaggi e Missione ivi fatta* [*Historical Notes on Tibet and Memoirs of the Journeys and Missions Made There*]; *Mgo skar gyi bla ma i po li do zhes bya ba yis phul ba'i bod kyi mkhas pa rnams la skye ba snga ma dang stong pa nyid kyi lta ba'i sgo nas zhu*

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Beltramini, Enrico. 2018 Review: *Jesuit on the Roof of the World; Father Ippolito Desideri; & a Jesuit's Quest for the Soul of Tibet*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:371-384.



*ba [Inquiry Concerning the Doctrines of Previous Lives and Emptiness Offered to the Scholars of Tibet by the Star Head Lama Called Ippolito]; and, Ke ri se ste an kyi chos lugs kyi snying po[Essence of the Christian Religion].* The books under review here cover both stories: Trent Pomplun presents a biography of Desideri; Sweet translates *Notizie istoriche* into English; and finally, Lopez Jr. and Jinpa's manuscript offers an English translation of the Tibetan books *Inquiry* and *Essence*.

In this article, I offer a brief profile of Desideri's life and works, including his mission in Tibet. I also sketch a history of Jesuit missions to Tibet, to help the reader contextualize Desideri's missionary enterprise and the so-called Jesuit-Capuchin struggle over which religious order within Roman Catholicism would be allowed to evangelize Tibet. In the second section, I address the three books in turn. Finally, I address the complexity of Desideri's approach to the Tibetans and their religion, as such approach has been clarified by other scholars' work and through the translation of his very words. In the last section, I offer some personal comment on Desideri. Translations from Italian into English are my own.

Ippolito Desideri was born in 1684 in Pistoia, near Florence, and joined the Society of Jesus in 1700. During his years of study in Rome, he was ordered to go to Tibet and establish a Jesuit mission. Desideri left Italy in 1712 and after a stop in Goa (India), he reached Lhasa in 1716. In 1721, Desideri was ordered to leave Tibet and return to India. In 1727, he left India and returned to Rome, where he died in 1733 at the age of forty-eight. A prolific author, his works were written for different audiences and with different purposes. His writings in Tibetan are a repudiation of Buddhism in the Tibetan language and style. They are intended for Buddhist scholars and aim to convert. These manuscripts are probably the first example of Tibetan Christian literature (Gisper-Sauch 1985:27). His works in Italian (partially translated in Latin) were for an ecclesial audience to further Jesuit missionary efforts in Tibet. These manuscripts take the form of a report, offering a window into Tibetan culture and thought. For reasons that will become clear later, Desideri has attracted the interest of scholars not only in different fields of Roman Catholicism (church

history, history of mission, theology of religions), but also Tibetan Buddhism, the history of Tibet, and Buddhist-Christian studies.

Jesuit explorers made their way to Tibet on four different occasions between 1624 and 1721. Portuguese Jesuit, Antonio de Andrade (1580-1634), who set out from India in search of rumored (but non-existent) Christian communities beyond the Himalayas, made the first trip in 1624. The expedition of Jesuits Estêvão Cacella (1585-1630) and João Cabral (1599-1669) followed in 1626. In the meantime, the Jesuit's goal had changed, i.e., the establishment of missions that might serve as intersecting points of a land route between China and India. Searching for such an overland route, the Austrian Jesuit, Johannes Grueber (1623-1680) and the Belgian Albert d'Orville (1621-1662), were the first Europeans to reach Lhasa in 1661. The final journey was that of Desideri, who journeyed to the seat of the Dalai Lama and lived with the Tibetans for almost five years to study their religion, language, and customs, engaging in a kind of intellectual mission.

Desideri was not, despite his claims, the only Christian in Lhasa, nor the only Christian in Tibet. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Lhasa was an international city with Russian and Armenian merchants and commerce. Lhasa also hosted a Capuchin mission. In the severely hierarchical organization of the Roman Catholic Church of that time, religious orders were granted mission jurisdiction in non-Christian territories by the Propaganda Fide, the branch of the Church administration that controlled Catholic missionary activity worldwide. Italian missionaries of the Capuchin Order had been granted the Tibetan mission in 1703, and the Capuchins were ultimately responsible for the expulsion of Desideri from Tibet on the grounds of their exclusive right to the Tibetan mission as granted by the Propaganda Fide. Consequently, in January 1721, Desideri received an order to leave Tibet and return to India, which ended the Jesuit mission in Tibet.

In the last three centuries, Ippolito Desideri has undergone a series of remarkable transformations in academic literature. In the nineteenth century literature, he was perceived as an explorer. The recovery of parts of his Italian writings attracted the interest of Tibetanists who saw him as the posthumous founder of Tibetan studies.

The discovery of Desideri's Tibetan writings captivated the attention of Roman Catholic theologians who interpreted him as a theologian who anticipated the current conversation on interreligious dialogue.

The most recent renaissance in Desideri studies is the brainchild of Enzo Gualtierio Bargiacchi, an independent scholar from Desideri's birthplace, Pistoia, Italy. In the early twenty-first century, Bargiacchi's first articles on Desideri set the stage for a series of small monographs, articles, and conference presentations that culminated in works of great importance for Desideri studies. In particular, a website devoted to Desideri (<http://www.ippolito-desideri.net>) is a goldmine of information on the Jesuit, related to Bargiacchi's larger *Progetto Desideri*. The three books considered in this review are part of this greater effort toward reappraisal of the great Jesuit.

...

*Jesuit on the Roof of the World: Ippolito Desideri's Mission to Tibet* is a biography and analysis of Desideri's theological approach to Tibetan Buddhism. The author, Trent Pomplun, is Associate Professor in the Theology Department of Loyola University, Maryland. While Professor Pomplun introduces his book on Desideri as a historical account of the Jesuit's mission, his book is more than that. Part theology, part mission history, and part Church history, Pomplun engages the Jesuit in a sequential series of chapters: Desideri's life before and during his mission in Tibet (chapters One and Two); Desideri's attitude toward Buddhist philosophy (Chapter Three); historical background (Chapter Four); the Jesuit-Capuchin dispute over canonical jurisdiction (Chapter Five); and notes on Desideri's literary style (Chapter Six). A hundred pages of notes and a bibliography add to the usefulness of this critical biography. I focus here on the theological encounter and the intra-Catholic dispute, which are the best chapters.

Based on close readings of a wide range of primary sources in Tibetan, Italian, and Latin, Pomplun decodes the philosophical and theological dialogue between the first Christian missionary and theologian to master the Tibetan language and Tibetan traditions of Buddhist thought. Pomplun sees this theological dialogue in terms of the encounter of two forms of scholasticism. On one side, the author offers a brief but comprehensive description of the Jesuit version of "Baroque Scholasticism"; on the other, Pomplun describes the

ambiguity of Desideri's approach to Tibetan Buddhism, a mix of respect for the depth and integrity of the religion of the Tibetan Plateau and missionary impulse to correct a supposed form of theoretical atheism. Of course, at the center of this dialogue stands the dictum that Christianity is a religion and Tibetan Buddhism is a philosophy. If it is a religion, Tibetan Buddhism is a bad religion, i.e., a religion influenced by demons. But according to Desideri, Buddhism is not a religion because it escapes the notion of God and refuses the idea of His providence. Desideri attempted to convince his interlocutors - with no remarkable results - the scholarly monks of the monasteries in which he learned Buddhism, of their philosophical errors, including the Tibetan doctrines of nothingness and reincarnation.

Pomplun also addresses the complex, exhausting juridical debate between two Roman Catholic orders, the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) and the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (the Franciscans) over the mission territory of Tibet. A skilled decoder of the intricate Catholic internal controversies, Pomplun's careful and accurate handling of the subject suggests that he knows Catholicism well from the inside. Despite the Italian missionaries of the Capuchin Order having been granted the Tibetan mission in 1703 by the Propaganda Fide, Desideri was nevertheless sent to Tibet by his superior, only to receive, five years later, an order by the same superior to leave Tibet and return to India.

However, this is not the end of the story. In the following decade, Desideri was occupied by the legal proceedings at the Propaganda Fide between himself, representing the Jesuit order, and Father Felice di Montecchio (1671-1732), his Capuchin counterpart. Desideri wrote three Defenses of the Jesuit position. Pomplun leads readers across the abstruse labyrinth of canon law to explain that the result had never been in question. The Franciscans outmaneuvered the Jesuits, who never had a real chance to be granted the mission territory of Tibet. On 29 November 1732, the Propaganda issued its final terse order on the matter, confirming the exclusive right of the Capuchins to the Tibet mission, and forbidding any further discussion on the subject.

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In his book, Pomplun mentions a new edition of Desideri's work, which appeared in 2010, the same year as Pomplun's own work. He notes that

he consulted this edition, and his own study appears to have informed it. This new edition is *Mission to Tibet: The Extraordinary Eighteenth-Century Account of Father Ippolito Desideri, S. J.*, a translation of *Notizie istoriche* that includes the critical apparatus of translations, notes, and indexes. The two editors, Michael J Sweet and Leonard Zwilling, are affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In an Introduction of more than one hundred pages, Sweet and Zwilling offer an exhaustive presentation of the nature and style of *Notizie istoriche*, the making of *Notizie istoriche*, and the historical context. The latter is of particular value, illuminating not only the life of Desideri, but also the intricate process that brought the Society of Jesus to send a missionary to Tibet and then to remove him. After the first missions in Tibet in the seventeenth century, Sweet and Zwilling explain that not only did the Jesuit's interest in Tibet fade, but "as strange as it may seem, ... all institutional memory, and seemingly all knowledge, of the earlier Jesuit presence in Tibet had been lost" (22).

In this juridical and practical void, the Capuchins requested permission to open a mission in Tibet. The request was granted and in 1707, the first Capuchin expedition reached Lhasa. Several other missions followed: in 1712 and 1716, two Capuchin expeditions reached Lhasa. The Jesuit interest in Tibet seems to have been rediscovered in coincidence with the Capuchin's missions. The new father general of the Society of Jesus, Michelangelo Tamburini (1648-1730), supported the proposal to send two Jesuits to Tibet in 1707, four years after the Capuchin Order had been granted the Tibetan mission by the Propaganda Fide. The project was aborted, but this failure only increased Tamburini's impatience. In the following year, two more Jesuits were proposed, approved, and finally redirected elsewhere, due to the manpower shortage.

In 1711, two men were sent to Tibet by the Society, but one died and the other gave up the mission. It is in this context that Desideri emerged as an option. Sweet and Zwilling address the logical questions: Why did the Jesuit seek to revive a mission in which they had apparently lost all interest and all knowledge? Why did they send missionaries to Tibet that had been granted to another religious order? Their answer is that Tamburini thought that by sending missionaries into Tibet, the Society of Jesus revitalized the memories of its previous

missions and introduced a juridical exception to the 1703 decision whereby the Propaganda Fide granted the rival Capuchins the mission to Tibet. Sweet's and Zwilling's description of the juridical and historical background of Desideri's expedition to Tibet reveals the precarious status of such an expedition, one that in effect lasted only five years.

Combined with Desideri's mission in Tibet, the Society of Jesus engaged in a series of appeals to the Pope to try and overrule the 1703 decision of the Propaganda Fide. Desideri wrote the first appeal, which was filed in 1718. This coincided with the decision of the Propaganda Fide to grant the Capuchins exclusive rights in Tibet. A second appeal was filed to the Pope and the Propaganda Fide the next year against the decree that the Jesuits should leave Tibet. More appeals were filed in 1721, mostly by Desideri, upon his return from Lhasa to Delhi. Desideri issued a summons to da Montecchio to answer his grievances before a papal tribunal. Finally, in 1728, he returned to Rome and produced his defense. It is in this legal battle that Desideri composed *Notizie istoriche*. Upon arrival in Rome, Desideri had nearly completed a first draft of the account of his journey. He immediately began to write a second version in three books, and then penned a further revision of the work, so that the accounts of his journey written in Italian consisted of four volumes. *Notizie istoriche* is one of those four volumes. Sweet and Zwilling explain that at least five versions of *Notizie istoriche* have been produced and how the account of Desideri's journey and the legal documents prepared for the legal confrontation with the Capuchins are entangled.

While an account of just how Desideri's Italian manuscripts were recovered is absorbing, it is beyond the scope of this review. It is enough to say that Desideri's Italian writings languished in various archives, including the Jesuit Archive in Rome, for almost two centuries, unknown until the Pistoian gentleman and antiquity collector Filippo Rossi Cassigoli (1836-1890), discovered them in 1875.

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*Dispelling the Darkness: A Jesuit's Quest for the Soul of Tibet* is a translation from the Tibetan of two of Desideri's writings, *Inquiry* and *Essence*. In Tibet, Desideri managed to write five important works in the Tibetan language. Four of these have been published in Italian

translation (Toscano 1981-1989). The unpublished manuscript is *Inquiry*. *Dispelling* is the work of two leading experts on Tibet and Buddhism, that is, the American Donald S. Lopez Jr. and Tibetan Thupten Jinpa (official translator of the XIV Dalai Lama). The authors translate selections from the monumental unpublished *Inquiry*, and all of *Essence*, into English, and provide introductions both to the life of Desideri and to his writings.

Desideri's *Inquiry* is a repudiation of two pillars of Tibetan Buddhist doctrine: rebirth (or 'reincarnation' in Christian terms) and emptiness. He divided the work into two parts. The first is a series of poems meant to captivate the attention of his audience and frame a Christian message within a Buddhist narrative. The second is a long, intricate, and carefully written interpretation of Tibetan Buddhism as a philosophy. The reasons for this transformation will be addressed later in this review. Moving from a rhetorical to an argumentative style, Desideri first challenged the notion of rebirth, but he never completed this section. His original plan, as explained by the authors of *Dispelling*, contained a refutation of the Buddhist position on rebirth, the presentation of the Christian position on the subject, and the rebuttal of objections that the opponent might raise. However, Desideri concluded only some parts of the original plan. Desideri elaborated a first Tibetan-language draft of this work in 1716. Then, on 24 June 1718, he started, from scratch, another draft on the same topic, which he would work on throughout 1719.

*Essence* is a systematic presentation of Christian faith in the Tibetan language and style. The work is divided into two parts. The first is an exposition of Being as Self-existing and cause of all that is through the arguments of the first cause (i.e., a demonstration of the uncreated creator of all). The second is a dialogue between a teacher and a disciple on "the essence of wisdom." The dialogue offers a definition of "Who is it that is called a 'Christian'."

Christians are people who have faith in Jesus Christ, the peerless and supreme guide, and who uphold him as the crown jewel and practice the flawless faith and religion set forth by the sole guide, the lord himself (207).

The dialogue continues, addressing the three aspects of faith that are necessary for Christians: the faith of belief, the faith that makes hope possible, and the faith that produces joy in a pure and resplendent heart (i.e., charity). Faith, hope, and charity are the three theological virtues that allow humanity to share in God's nature (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In this review, I address a specific angle of Desideri, i.e., his intellectual approach to Tibetan Buddhism. It has been said (in particular by Janet Gyatso, Professor of Buddhist Studies at Harvard University and a specialist in Tibetan Buddhist studies) that Desideri shows in his writing a "complex combination of admiration, accommodation, and refutation of Tibetan Buddhist thought" (Trent 2010:back cover). A brief comment on these three terms may help the reader better appreciate the prehistory of what we now call interreligious dialogue.

Desideri's writings in Italian show an uncompromised admiration of Tibetan Buddhist thought. In later accounts, he commented that:

If one considers what I have stated about the Tibetan religion, although I believe the articles of Faith to be absolutely wrong and pestiferous, yet the rules and directions imposed on the will are not alien to the principles of sound reason; they seem to me worthy of admiration as they not only prescribe hatred of vice, inculcate battling against passions, but, what is more remarkable, lead man towards sublime and heroic perfection (Desideri 1932:299-300).

I will return later to this distinction between "the article of Faith" and "the rules and directions imposed on the will." Here I focus on Desideri's explicit "admiration" for a religious thinking that has the power to bring the human to perfection. This admiration turns into attraction and sympathy. Desideri was attracted by Tibetan belief and showed an instinctive understanding of the subtle forms of Buddhist doctrines. He shared the life of Buddhist scholars, seemed to adopt their feelings, and ended up penetrating their minds. His attraction can be better appreciated if linked with Desideri's sympathy, an instinctive understanding of the depth of Tibetan Buddhist doctrines



without knowledge of Indian philosophy. Nevertheless, he could grasp intuitively and express brilliantly the complex meaning of concepts such as emptiness and reincarnation. Giuseppe Tucci notes how the Jesuit's work "even today is by depth and clarity one of the safest expositions of Tibetan religious beliefs also for its width of mind and for the sympathy with which he approached the people he was a guest" (1943:224-225).

Was Desideri a disciple of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and his enculturation strategy? This is what Professor Gyatso calls "accommodation." Accommodation, or enculturation, is the adoption by the Jesuit missionary of the customs, the way of life, even the way of thinking of the people to convert. As the 29th Society of Jesus General, Dutchman Peter Hans Kolvenbach (1928-2016) says "enculturation is both method and substance of evangelization. It means meeting other men at their roots and deepest principles, and there favor an encounter with the Gospel" (Kolvenbach 1990, 76). Enculturation, in the case of Desideri, means to express himself in the very modes of Tibetan Buddhist thought. The XIV Dalai Lama offers an illuminating perspective of Desideri's engagement with Tibetan Buddhism from a Tibetan Buddhist perspective:

Fascinated by the complexity of Buddhist thought and religious practice, this Jesuit [i.e., Desideri] not only mastered the Tibetan language but also embarked on a rigorous study of some of the key Buddhist texts that form the heart of the academic curriculum in the scholastic monasteries (2010:11).

His Holiness then comments on one of the five Tibetan texts written by Desideri. As it becomes evident later in the quote, the Dalai Lama may be referring to *Inquiry*. Here readers have a description of Desideri's hermeneutical strategy from a Tibetan perspective:

It turns out that, during his stay in Lhasa, Desideri composed a lengthy text in Tibetan. His book uses the model of many Tibetan Buddhist scholastic works, which typically treat a key topic within the framework of three broad headings: 1. refutation of the standpoint of others; 2. positing of one's own standpoint; and 3. rebuttal of objections against one's own

standpoint raised by others. The work presented his critique of the key Buddhist theories of karma, rebirth, and emptiness. Then, remarkably using Buddhist philosophical language and phraseology, he argued for the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity and dealt with possible objections against this doctrine that might be raised from the Buddhist philosophical standpoint (2010:11).

The Dalai Lama's comment proceeds with another remark:

According to a Tibetan scholar who has read Desideri's text (which is as yet unpublished), the work begins with a robust argument for the value of comparative religious study. For example, I am told that Desideri argues that if one finds a convergence of one's own tradition with another, this can serve as an indirect affirmation of both. He uses the image of a tree watered by different sources—rain water, a stream, and so on—where the tree resembles the human soul while the water represents the different spiritual traditions that can sustain and nurture it (2010:12).

The Dalai Lama concludes his proceeding with another remark:

Although he came originally as a missionary, intent to convert the Tibetans to Christianity, Desideri's experience of immersion in Tibetan culture produced a remarkable and very early testament to inter-religious dialogue. I hope that one day a translation and a careful study of this important document will be undertaken to make it available to the wider world (2010:12).

Two considerations must be added at this point. First, by the time Desideri embarked on his mission in 1712, the Jesuit approach of accommodating local customs had been severely condemned by the Vatican and the Pope himself (1704). Of course, Desideri was aware of the situation and he does not defend accommodation in his writings. His approach can be probably better defined as "pragmatic," as it adopted a pragmatic style, learning the colloquial and literary languages, exchanging gifts with courtiers and monks, and tailoring his apologetics to Tibetan sensibilities and cultural categories. Second, despite the sympathetic approach to Buddhism and admiration for

Tibetan philosophies, Desideri was a missionary, and his purpose was evangelization.

I now return to the distinction between "the article of Faith" and "the rules and directions imposed to the will" mentioned earlier. In his years in Rome, before moving to India, Desideri learned a specific theology of non-Christian religions, later called "exclusivism" in the Catholic vernacular and dismissed half a century ago, according to which non-Christian religions are human inventions. Only Christianity comes from God. Or, in a more theological fashion, Desideri learned the distinction between the "natural virtues" of an unbeliever and the "supernatural grace" that directs these virtues toward Christian salvation. Therefore, the articles of faith of Tibetan Buddhism are false by definition. The remaining part of Buddhism, "the rules and directions imposed to the will," attracted his attention because it belongs to the natural order of things, i.e., the realm of nature in which the human pursues natural ends, i.e., "perfection."

As a product of Second Scholasticism, Desideri believed in a "purely natural order" in which humanity receives natural divine gifts proportionate to human nature. Christians, however, enjoy a second supernatural end, given in the form of a divinely decreed gift. Thus, an existential, ontological separation exists between believers (i.e., Christians) and non-believers, so that the intellectual encounter between religions, according to eighteenth-century Scholasticism, never takes the form of a real theological dialogue. It is highly improbable that Desideri conceived himself as involved in a real confrontation at the level of faith, because he was operating under the assumption that there exists only one true faith. To put it differently, Desideri maintained an asymmetrical relationship with his Buddhist scholar fellows, claiming to build a philosophical common ground when in reality, he was engaging in traditional theology in order to convince his audience of the erroneousness of its concepts. A further discussion of this topic can be found in the literature (Pomplun 2011).

A final comment: Desideri's reports, catechisms, and memories, as Pomplun and the other scholars considered in this review explain, are designed for persuasion. His Tibetan works are written to woo the Tibetan elite away from their faith. His Italian works are conceived specifically to persuade the Office of the Propaganda to rule in favor of

the Jesuits over the Capuchins. Finally, his Latin works served to edify both Jesuit missionaries and donors in Europe. Fundamentally, Desideri emerges as a man of sober rationality combined with a sympathetic appreciation of Tibetan Buddhism. I suggest readers take this statement literally. Desideri was a missionary and his mission was evangelization. Thus, in reading his writings, whether in Italian, Latin, or Tibetan, a reader should remember that no matter what level Desideri's sympathetic appreciation of Tibetan Buddhism rose to, conversion is his focus and the purpose of his writings. Moreover, Desideri was a man of sober rationality in a dual sense: he excelled in philosophy and he used it as a neutral ground to discuss concepts and notions with his Tibetan Buddhist friends. It is in his philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism that eventually his main legacy resides.

As writer José Saramago says in *Travels in Portugal*, "the journey never ends. Only the travelers end. And they too may live on in memory" (Saramago 1990:443).

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## REVIEW: A GRAMMAR OF GUÌQIÓNG

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Jiāng Lì. 2015. *A Grammar of Guìqióng: A Language of Sichuan*. Leiden: Brill. xiv + 452 pp. ISBN 9789004292093 (hardback 213USD) - E-ISBN 9789004293045 (electronic 217USD).

Jiang Li's *A Grammar of Guìqióng* (henceforth, *AGG*) is a revision of her PhD dissertation at the University of Berne under the supervision of George Van Driem.<sup>2</sup> It is a most welcome contribution to our understanding of this under-described language. The primary dialects of Guìqióng described in *AGG* are spoken in Changma Village of Maibeng Township and Qianxi Village of Qianxi Township, both in Kangding County, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China. Some praiseworthy aspects of *AGG* include a plethora of examples sentences; a total of about 1500 example sentences are in the book. Included in the list of abbreviations are the linguistic forms from Guìqióng. The inclusion of photographs of the Guìqióng people and their geographic setting adds interest and appeal to the book. Appendix 1 (321-347) contains six texts of "sayings, stories, and recollections."

This review is divided into sections similar to the divisions that the chapters of *AGG* provide: Introduction to *AGG*, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Errata, and Conclusion. Comments on *AGG*'s chapter on pragmatics will be incorporated into the section on syntax since *AGG*'s chapter on pragmatics is very short. Back-matter will also be briefly overviewed in the syntax section.

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Gates, Jesse P. 2018. Review: *A Grammar of Guìqióng*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:385-397.

<sup>2</sup> Except for the title of the book and direct quotes from *A Grammar of Guìqióng*, I have removed all tone marking as I consider it an unnecessary burden for myself and the reader. Consequently, the 'Guìqióng' language will be referred to as 'Guìqiong'.

INTRODUCTION TO *AGG*

Chapter One serves as an introduction to the people, language, geography, and culture of the Guiqiong. Section 1.2 is speculative in its examination of the origins of the ethnonyms, autonoms, and exonyms of the Guiqiong. Sections 1.2-1.4 (on onomastic identity, history, and archaeology) lack adequate citation and referencing.

Section 1.5 (9-10) does a better job citing key sources and helps the reader understand what researchers in the PRC have uncovered regarding the history of the Guiqiong people. Jiang accepts the story of an unbroken connection with the historical usage of the term 'Qiang' and the present 'Rma' speaking language communities that now bear the Minzu designation of Qiang (see 14-15, for example).

There are several enjoyable short passages that give insight into Guiqiong culture and life. However, in describing Guiqiong houses, Jiang describes the first floor and then jumps to the third floor without mentioning the second floor (10).

Some interesting findings on the population and vitality of the Guiqiong language include: "In Qiánxǐ, a dozen Hàn Chinese villagers have learnt to speak the language due to the fact that local Guìqióng speakers do not speak Chinese" (18). "In the two north towns, Sānhé and Jǐntāng, over 1000 people of Hàn Chinese in [sic] nationality perhaps of Guìqióng origin can still speak the language" (18).

Jiang divides the Guiqiong language community into "listeners" and "speakers" (probably passive vs. active users) and gives numbers that are higher than previous estimates of the population (12,564 listeners; 9,677 speakers). Unfortunately, according to *AGG* the Guiqiong language is disappearing rapidly (18-19).

## PHONOLOGY

Guiqiong phonology is the topic of Chapter Three in *AGG*. Jiang's analysis of Guiqiong phonology boasts a consonant inventory of 60 consonant phonemes, eight vowel phonemes, and three tonemes. Two elements that are common in most phonological descriptions are lacking in the phonology chapter. Firstly, no distinctions are made

between loan and native words (Tibetan, Chinese, or native), despite Guiqiong being under heavy influence from Tibetan and Chinese. Secondly, although Jiang discusses the syllable, she does not give a syllable template/canon (58).

Jiang claims that Guiqiong's consonant inventory includes many consonants with a breathy counterpart; the exceptions being bilabial fricatives, laterals, nasals, approximates, retroflex stops, and the glottal fricative. The claim of voiced breathy consonants should include evidence from spectrograms, but unfortunately it does not. Although breathy consonants may be phonetic phenomena, breathy consonants as a phonological category in Guiqiong is suspect with the information provided. Each time there is a breathy voice consonant Jiang claims that it is also followed by a low tone (e.g., 35, 38, 42, 56). She claims that, "[a] breathy voiced syllable always has the low falling tone" (56). This does not seem to be the most economic analysis and is contradictory to accepted principles of phonological analysis.

I suggest two alternative possibilities. The first is to remove the phonological category of breathy voice consonants and make a claim for the existence of a low tone. The second is to make a claim for the phonological category of breathy voice consonants and remove the claim for a low tone. Since the Jiang already has evidence for a low tone phonologically, as will be discussed below, the first suggested alternative analysis (no breathy voice consonants and a low tone) seems the most reasonable. If these breathy consonants can be accounted for by a low phonological tone, Jiang's consonant inventory of Guiqiong can then be reduced by another ten consonants.

In addition, Jiang puts the consonants of high tone syllables that start with *m*, *n*, *l*, *w*, *ŋ*, *j*, and *ɲ* (marked with an apostrophe; e.g., 'm', 'n', 'l, etc.) as part of her consonant inventory, even though the high tone is already accounted for in her tone analysis. Thus, her consonant inventory should be reduced by another eight consonants, bringing the total number now to forty-two (when including the analysis that removes the additional ten breathy voiced consonants), which seems more plausible from an areal and typological perspective.

The account of breathy consonants and high tone consonants are major errors in the phonological analysis of *AGG*. At the very least, Jiang can simplify her analysis of the consonant inventory and account



for these additional "consonants" with her tone analysis. Acoustic analysis should be provided to give evidence for tones and for breathy voice consonants. Incidentally, Rao, who has also written a grammar of Guiqiong (2015), has never encountered breathy consonants in her Guiqiong data (pc).

In Guiqiong, each vowel can be nasalized. Jiang also claims that there are diphthongs and triphthongs. There is no justification in *AGG* for why diphthongs are analyzed as such: *teiu* 'what', *dzie* 'eight' and *dziə* 'hundred', *dziə* 'look', *dz'ie* 'consume', *tehyo* 'sit', *χui* 'tooth', *mikue* 'tail', *khue'wu* 'sweet things' or triphthong *tʂuei* 'jump' and *ʂiʂuei* 'caress' (24). Why not analyze these as consonant clusters e.g., *tɕʰj*, *dʒj*, *χw*, *kw*, *tʂw*, etc.? This is not to say that the analysis is wrong in *AGG*, but the analysis warrants justification, especially since from the examples the diphthongs that start with *i* always follow palatals and diphthongs that start with *u* follows velars and uvulars (24). Neither is there justification for why *AGG* includes a distinction between nasalized vowels and velar nasal codas (24). The rest of the section on the vowel phonemes should be commended for providing a good analysis with evidence.

Jiang's analysis of Guiqiong tone is also suspect because tone is predictable based on voicing. Voiceless obstruent initial syllables are always in the high toneme category, voiced obstruent initial syllables are always in the medial toneme category, and breathy initial syllables are always in the low toneme category (54). Are these distinctions only phonetic? Are not the distinctions in voicing what the speakers of Guiqiong use primarily to distinguish minimal contrast? Jiang's analysis does not satisfactorily answer these questions. Using Occam's razor, perhaps it is better to account for tone in Guiqiong with simply two categories (high vs. low), since contrasts with nasals, laterals, approximates, and vowel initial syllables seem to be accounted for best this way.

As mentioned above, it seems most reasonable to account for the so called "breathy" consonants with simply proposing a low tone. Jiang gives evidence for a two tonal category analysis:

[i]n comparison, the three-tone contrast is prominent among syllables with affricate and plosive consonant initials. Syllables with nasal, glides and vowel onsets are distinguished between the high and medial level tone.

Guìqióng initial nasals, glides and vowels are listed below in the two tone names, the high level and the medial level respectively (56).

In addition, Jiang's discussion of a so-called neutral tone is vague, with statements such as, "[t]he neutral tone in Guìqióng sounds very slight and short, similar to the neutral tone in Mandarin" (55).

A far more in-depth analysis of tone in Guìqióng (also of a variety from Maibeng Township) has been conducted by Rao (2015), who devotes an entire chapter (Chapter Three, 69-111) to tone - about five times the pages that Jiang devotes to tone. This does not invalidate the differences that Jiang has found *per se*, as linguistic differences can be found between individuals living in the same village. However, the analysis given by Rao is far more robust than that found in *AGG* because it includes analyses of tone in monosyllables, disyllables, in the environment of nominal suffixes and clitics, tone in relationship with verbs and their prefixes, and tone sandhi patterns. Jiang, however, only devotes only 8.5 pages to the topic of tone (49-57) and does not discuss how tone works in nouns compared to verbs or what happens to the tonal patterns with affixation.

Jiang is to be commended for her discussion of vowel harmony. Similar to Stau (Gates and Kim 2016 and Forthcoming), Guìqióng has regressive vowel harmony. Among the various manifestations of vowel harmony in Guìqióng, the vowels of the negation prefix *mə-* ~ *mə-* ~ *mə-* and the prohibitive prefix *the-* ~ *thə-* ~ *thə-* assimilate to the root that they attach to; the vowel being determined by the vowel in the root (front, mid, or back) (59-60). In Stau, the choice of the vowel for the past negation prefix *ma-* ~ *mə-* is determined by whether the vowel of the root is front *æ* or back *a* (e.g., *mə-rgæ* 'did not like' vs. *ma-ka* 'no problem'); and the prohibitive triggers vowel harmony in the directional prefix that precedes it (e.g., *ti-ti-jən* 'DIR.AWAY-PROHIB-say', *ni-ti-rtsh<sup>hi</sup>* 'DIR.DOWN-PROHIB-kick', *ri-ti-εə* 'DIR.UP-PROHIB-go', etc.).

#### MORPHOLOGY

Chapter Three, focusing on morphology, is divided into sections on nominal and verbal morphology. There are subsections that discuss case, which includes grammatical markers such as ablative, ergative, instrumental, illative, genitive/attributive (including a "genitive

nominalizer"), dative, lative, and comparative. There are also subsections on the diminutive, pronouns, demonstratives, and numerals. The data is described well in these subsections.

As do many languages in the Ethnic Corridor, Guiqiong makes a distinction between inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns. The use of a logophoric pronoun, in the case of Guiqiong *wu*, for indirect speech is also common in Ethnic Corridor languages and is discussed with examples for Guiqiong (88).

In Guiqiong, "a genitive nominal can cause ambiguity because it may indicate both possessive and beneficiary" as in the example (1) below, from AGG's example (54) on p71:

- (1)      zo 'ɛpɛ-mɛ      'mɔtsɛi-tɕie 'ɲyɛŋ-lɛ  
          3S father-GEN cap-CL    buy-PF  
          'He has bought the cap for his father.'  
          or  
          'He bought a cap from (my) father.'

In Stau, there is also a genitive and benefactive overlap, as in the following example (2):

- (2)      tʰɛ=yə æpæ=ji      tɕi kə-v-rə-sə  
          3=ERG father=GEN hat PFV-INV-buy-IFR  
          'He bought a hat for his father.'  
          or  
          'He bought his father's hat (from his father).'

In fact, in English, "he bought his father's hat" in certain contexts could mean "he bought a hat for his father" and in other contexts it might mean "he bought a hat from his father." It would be of value to see how many languages have this overlap of ambiguity between genitive and benefactive. The ambiguity seems to lie in whether or not the third argument is considered a truly third argument (oblique) or if it is part of the second argument (with the possessor considered a modifier).

Jiang lists the months of the year (101), but fails to mention that these clearly are borrowings from Tibetan. The forms for the months of the year in Guiqiong are as follows: *dɛŋpu* 'January', *ŋɿpu*  
 ·390·

'February', *sɛŋpu* 'March', *zɪpu* 'April', 'ɲəpu 'May', *dzupu* 'June', *dɛnpu* 'July', *dziɛpu* 'August', *gɛɪpu* 'September', *tɕipu* 'October', *sɛntɕi* 'November', and *dzuɛŋpu/bɛi'lisɛi* 'December'.

In the subsection on verbal morphology, Jiang analyzes and describes Guiqiong bare stem sentences (infinitives); which include expressions of habituality, impending events, and imperatives. The latter are usually just a second person pronoun and a bare stem verb e.g., *nuŋ go* 'You eat!' (106).

Copulas, derivation, directional prefixes, tense, aspect, modality, evidentiality, causatives, negation, adverbs/adverbials, and the instrumental/oblique nominalizer are all discussed in the subsection on Guiqiong verbal morphology. Equational constructions are generally expressed without a copula, but there is also an equational copula *dzi*, which Jiang claims is a borrowing of the Chinese 是 <shì> 'be' (more accurately 'is'), used mostly for emphatic purposes or to answer yes-no questions (107). Guiqiong, like certain other languages of the area - including some Rma languages (LaPolla and Huang 2007) and Stau - has both an animate and inanimate existential copula; and also has a dependent existential verb *bu*, and a negative existential *mẽ*. Guiqiong also has an inchoative copula *ni* (107). Guiqiong distinguishes the age of animate or inanimate arguments with the grammatical morphemes *gẽ* and *ni*, respectively.

Most languages in the area have strategies for incorporating Chinese loan words, and Guiqiong is no exception. The verbs *bɛi* 'do' and *phɔ* 'feel', 'suffer' or 'undergo' can take nominal loans from Chinese and verbalize them. Reduplication is a strategy for creating frequentative semantics (125). One example of verbal triplication is given (example (385) on p125), but very little description is given. Verbal triplication in Guiqiong, and how it compares with Stau (the only other language that has a description of the same phenomena, Gates 2017) remains to be fully explored. Otherwise, good discussion of reduplication in Guiqiong is provided (125-127).

Linguists use various terms to describe grammatical marking that "denotes truth or fact previously unaware or unrevealed to the addressee" (137), e.g., 'mirative' (Delancey 1997), or 'attention marking' (Yliniemi 2016). Jiang uses the term 'gnomic present tense' in her discussion of the morpheme *-wu*. Although Jiang claims that

this gnomic present tense marker -'wu marks new information for the hearer, the following examples (3) and (4) that appear in *AGG* on p137 as examples (437) and (439), respectively, do not appear to be new information in any context (except perhaps when speaking to a child).

- (3)      muhi tɕhieŋsi ʂɔ-'wu  
          wind often      blow-GN  
          'It is the case that the wind often blows.'

- (4)      ŋeŋ'wuŋ tsui                      ɣɔ-'wu  
          cat      mouse                      catch-GN  
          'It is the case that cats catch mice.'

The term 'gnomic' typically is used in linguistic literature to discuss expressions of factual or well-known information. Therefore, Jiang's choice of category being gnomic seems correct, but her prose description of new information seems contradictory. Although all of the examples on pp137-142 could be new information to the speaker, it seems that the examples all have simple fact as a common denominator. Whether or not the information is supposed to be new to the addressee is not explicated through grammatical markings in these examples. Jiang seems to be stretching a bit in her description of -'wu as marking new information, "with a hint that the fact was not previously noted by the addressee" (150).

A similar problem is found with Jiang's analysis of -'wudzi as a 'gnomic potential mood marker'. The morpheme -'wu is clearly the same gnomic suffix as in examples (3) and (4). According to Jiang, -'wudzi marks information that "according to the speaker, is previously unknown to the addressee" (251). However, examples (5) and (6) from examples 1032 and 1033 in *AGG* (251), seem to be prospective aspect for matter-of-fact statements.

- (5)      ʂeŋ tɕhimu wu-tɕhiu      gɛŋ tsuŋ khi-'wu dzi  
          iron outside DIR-put      CON rust get-GN COP  
          'A piece of iron will get rusty if it is put outside.'

- (6)      sɛnpu ji-tshɔ̌ gɛŋ dɛ-'wu dʒi  
          tree DIR-sow CON big-GN COP  
          'Once a tree is planted, it will grow big.'

It is hard to imagine that an adult would not know that "a piece of iron will get rusty if it is left outside," or that "a tree will grow big after it has been planted." The label "gnomic potential" is correct; the statement that this is "unknown to the addressee" seems highly suspect. Rao's (2015 and pc, 2017) analysis is much simpler and more persuasive. According to Rao's analysis, -'wu is a nominalizer and dʒi is a copula. Analyzing -'wu as a nominalizer seems to be a better analysis for AGG's 'gnomic present tense' and 'gnomic potential mood marker' (as in examples 3-6 above).

The discussion of the agentive nominalizer is convincing, but the tense subsection seems like an odd place to put this discussion.

Guiqiong has a variety of post-verbal markers to indicate various kinds of aspect: progressive, perfective, dynamic perfective, and static perfective, dependent perfective, perfective with volition, and momentaneous aspect. There are also numerous auxiliaries, modality markers, and modal verbs.

There is a thorough analysis and description of a circumstantial marker -lu, (198-206). There is also a fine description of an optative construction (247-248), marked with the suffix -ku 'CAUS2', although I question whether the term 'optative' is best suited as a label for these constructions. For example, see (7) and (8) below:

- (7)      z'ei wu-go ji-ku  
          food DIR-eat go-CAUS2  
          'You go and get her to eat food.'
- (8)      zo wu-'nyen ji-ku  
          3S DIR-buy      go-CAUS2  
          'You go and get him to buy (some wine).'

In my view, the term 'optative' is used for 'if only' constructions, and examples (7) and (8) do not reflect this (at least in the free translation). Since these constructions are marked with a causative suffix *-ku* 'CAUS2', examples (7) and (8) seem to be causative constructions.

Evidential constructions include, "the experienced auditory evidential marker *-tsimu*, the gnomic auditory evidential marker *-tsi'wu*, the visual evidential marker *-su'wu* and the speculative mood marker *-əmu*-" (248).

The visual evidential marker *-su'wu* and the speculative mood marker *-əmu*- (more likely *ə- mu*-) are well discussed. Guiqiong, like Stau, has a speculative particle *pe* (in Stau *ba*), that Jiang claims is borrowed from Mandarin 吧 <ba> (258). I speculate that the Stau speculative *ba* comes also from Chinese (Sichuanese in particular), and it would be interesting to see how many languages in the Sichuan Ethnic Corridor (and elsewhere in China) have this form with a similar function.

## SYNTAX

Chapter Four on syntax and Chapter Five on pragmatics are both brief (forty-two pages in total). Chapter Four discusses coordinate, subordinate, complement, and relative clauses; and also gives an analysis of indirect vs. direct speech, serial verb constructions, and basic word order. Chapter Five discusses new versus old information, topic-comment constructions, and focus presupposition constructions.

The discussion of complement clauses is too short and there is not enough explanation of the variation between different complement

clauses in terms of their morphosyntactic behavior and semantics (291-292). It would be interesting to see if Guìqiong has hybrid direct (or semi-direct speech) in addition to direct and indirect speech as described (292-293).

Following Chapter Five, there is an appendix with an Guìqiong-English glossary and also an appendix with an English-Guìqiong glossary. Bibliographic references are followed by an index at the end.

## ERRATA

Numerous typos and other errors detract from the quality of *AGG*. These oversights are contrary to the quality promised by a publisher such as Brill, and include the following:

- p 1, "was given at the beginning of the book" should read "will be given in this chapter"
- p 5, awkward: "where Dìjiǎohuà denotes a language spoken in wild field corners remote from centres of political administration"
- p 7, "The later findings of the cognate connection between Mùyǎ and the lost Tangut added to the source study that the Míngzhèng Tǔsī might have been post-Xìxià Tangut by descent (1994)." No name is given in the citation here or previously in the paragraph
- p 10, "Guìqióng men wear blue cloth turban. Women wear shorter turban and apron" should read "Guìqióng men wear blue cloth turbans. Women wear shorter turbans and aprons"
- pp 11 and 14, Jiang repeatedly uses "Qiangic" when "Qiang" would be better (although that term should in fact be replace with Rma)
- p 14, "A rich store of agricultural glossary" would read better as "A rich lexicon of agricultural terms"
- p 14, "Guìqióng mainly practices monogamy in marriage and family" should read "Guìqióng mainly practices monogamy"
- p. 14 "their forefathers removed to" should read "their forefathers moved to"
- p 15, "these Hàn surnames may have longer history than it was assumed" should read "these Hàn surnames may have a longer history than it was assumed"



- p 15, "and a series of complex procedure" should read "and a series of complex complex procedures"
- p 15, what are "prayer agregations"?
- p 16, "and the Tibetan Buddhism" should read "and Tibetan Buddhism"
- p 31, "voimit" should read "vomit"
- p 98, example (205), *ni* should be glossed 'two' and not 'one'

At times Jiang's writing is unclear. For example:

[t]he emphatic marker *-ni* indicating a case aberrant from or transcendent over an average standard might have been evolved from the ablative case marker *-ni*, which denotes the place, e.g. (16)-(19)... (65).

Firstly, this "emphatic marker" was not described for the reader. Secondly, what does "indicating a case aberrant from or transcendent over an average standard" mean?

Some sentences need redrafting since they are virtually indecipherable, e.g.:

- p 14, "detailed names of various part of a tilled field, and specified names of various parts of earliest tilling device"
- p 16, "the Guìqióng priest or shaman, which has been an important part of Guìqióng traditional culture with mysterious springhead"
- p 31, "the uvular /χ/ is a voiceless fricative a bit backward than the Mandarin velar /x/ and forward than the glottal /h/"

Brill should have sent *AGG* through at least one final round of editing before publishing.

## CONCLUSION

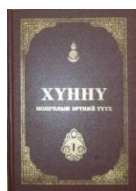
AGG betters our understanding of the structure of the Guiqiong language. Guiqiong culture and language is highly threatened, a fact that motivated AGG. However, as has been highlighted earlier, there are many errors and problematic analyses throughout AGG. I recommend that the author, editors, and publisher consider these issues and take whatever action is necessary to rectify them. Writing a grammar of a language is no small task, and Jiang should be commended for her comprehensive analysis and description.

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REVIEW: *THE EARLY HISTORY OF MONGOLIA*

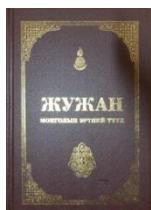
Reviewed by Mátyás Balogh (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)



Delgerjargal, P. (П. Дэлгэржаргал) and Z. Batsaihan (З. Батсайхан) (D. Erdenebaatar (Д. Эрдэнэбаатар), ed). 2017. *Hünnü (Хүннү) [The Xiongnu]*. Ulaanbaatar. 252 pages [238 + 2 (list of images) + 12 (bibliography)], 1 map, 36 images. ISBN 978-99978-58-03-0 (hardback).



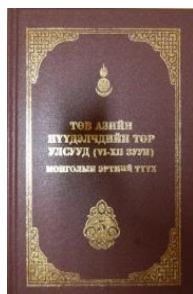
Delgerjargal, P. (П. Дэлгэржаргал) and S. Ölziibayar (С. Өлзийбаяр), ed). 2017. *Syan'bi (Сяньби) [The Xianbei]*. Ulaanbaatar. 227 pages [215 + 3 (list of images) + 9 (bibliography)] 3 maps, 70 images. ISBN 978-99978-58-07-8 (hardback).



Enhbat, A. (А. Энхбат) and S. Ölziibayar (С. Өлзийбаяр) (Ch. Amartüvshin (Ч. Амартүвшин, ed). 2017. *Jujan (Жужан) [The Rouran]*. Ulaanbaatar. 229 pages [206 + 1 (explanation to the appendixes) + 13 appendixes + 7 (bibliography)], 1 map. ISBN 978-99978-58-05-4 (hardback).



Batsüren, B. (Б. Батсүрэн) and P. Mönhtulga (P. Мөнхтулга) (A. Enhtör, (А. Энхтөр), ed). 2017. *Türeg, Uigur (Түрэг, Уйгур) [Turks and Uighurs]*. Ulaanbaatar. 250 pages [239 + 11 (bibliography)], 6 maps, 6 images. ISBN 978-99978-58-04-7 (hardback).



Batsüren, B. (Б. Батсүрэн), E. Chimeddorj (Э. Чигмэддорж), and B. Chinzorig [(Б. Чинзориг) (С. Cerendorj (Ц. Цэрэндорж), ed). 2017. *Töv Aziin nüudelchdiin tör ulsuud (VI - XII zuun) (Төв Азийн нүүдэлчдийн төр улсууд (VI - XII зуун) [Inner Asian Nomadic Polities (VI-XII Centuries)]*. Ulaanbaatar. 212 pages [198 + 14 (bibliography)], 3 maps, 17 images. ISBN 978-99978-58-06-1 (hardback).

The five books listed above comprise a book series titled *Mongoliin Ertнii Түүh* (Монголын эртний түүх) [*The Early History of Mongolia*] (henceforth MET), which was published in 2017 in Ulaanbaatar under the general editorship of P. Delgerjargal (П. Дэлгэржаргал) and B. Batsüren (Б. Батсүрэн). No publisher's name is given. The printer is listed as Соёмбо Принтинг 'Soyombo Printing'. The series is the result of cooperation between МУИС-ийн Монгол Судлaдын Хүрээлэн 'The Mongolian Studies Institute of Mongolian National University (MUIS), МУИС-ийн Түүхийн Тэнхим (History department faculty of the foregoing university), and ШУА-ийн Түүх Археологийн Хүрээлэн 'The History and Archaeology Institute of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences'.

In terms of pricing, I searched the internet in early August 2017, and only found the Hünнü volume, which was offered by a bookstore for 172,000 *tögrögs*.<sup>1</sup> Our faculty received these books as a gift from MUIS and I am unsure how these books might be obtained outside Mongolia.

Devoted to roughly one and a half millennia of history from the third century BC to the thirteenth century, the volumes are:

- 1 The Xiongnu
- 2 The Xianbei
- 3 The Rouran
- 4 Turks and Uighurs
- 5 Inner Asian Nomadic Polities (VI-XII centuries)

The MET volumes are not the first works that cover the history of the above peoples and published in Cyrillic Mongolian. The works of Dorjsüren (1961) and Sühbaatar (1971, 1992) on the Xiongnu, Xianbei, and Rouran well before the turn of the twenty-first century remain important secondary sources for today's historians in Mongolia. In the early twenty-first century, research on the ancient history of the Mongolian steppes gained new momentum in Mongolia, and several new histories were published. These included works on the Xiongnu (Batsaihan 2003, Ganbaatar 2008), and a bit later, materials on other

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<sup>1</sup> On 6 August 2017, this was equal to approximately seventy-one USD.

nomadic peoples (Batsüren 2009, 2016; Dashceren 2014). The publication of MET can be seen as a peak - hopefully not an unsurmountable one - of this momentum, which increased scholarly activity in this field of research.

Each volume of the series begins with opening remarks by the Mongolian President, Cahiagiin Elbegdorj (b. 1963), that mention *Mongolchuudiin бүтэсэн түүх* 'history created by the Mongols' and *bidnii түүх* 'our history', i.e., the history of the Mongols.

As can be seen from the titles of the volumes, the focus is on the histories of peoples that inhabited the Mongolian Plateau and adjacent regions prior to the appearance of the Mongols as a nation. Therefore, the title suggesting the history of Mongolia, is more or less accurate, but the President's words are misleading (more on this later). The Mongols did not create a large part of the history under discussion. Instead, it was created by the Xiongnu, Xianbei, Rouran, Turks, Uighurs, the Chinese, and other groups living on both sides of the Great Wall. History is generally not created by one people.

The Mongols as a people, and not as a tribe or federation of tribes, appeared in history in 1206, when Chinggis Khan founded the Mongolian Empire. Previously, the Mongol tribes were few of the many contenders for power on the eastern fringes of the Mongolian Plateau. Their political existence until the mid-eleventh century, when their incursions began causing serious problems for the Jurchen Jin-Dynasty's northwestern frontiers, did not play an important role in the history of the region.

The volumes are generally good summaries of previous studies on each subject with an extensive use of primary sources that are predominantly Chinese chronicles. Russian literature dominates the secondary sources, but Western and modern Chinese scholarship are also represented.

The topics of the volumes and their chapters revolve around the concept of ethnicity, as most of the titles suggest. In the Xianbei volume we find chapters, for example, on the Tuyuhun Kingdom and the different Yan dynasties, which were all established by the Murong Tribe of the Xianbei. Another chapter of the same volume deals with the successful dynasty of the Tabgach people (also a branch of the Xianbei), the Northern Wei. The Tuyuhun Kingdom was located

roughly in what is today Qinghai Province in China, which is rather far from Mongolia or the Mongolian steppes. Similarly, the Yan dynasties were not rulers of the steppe region, but of Northeast China - the territories in present-day Beijing and Hebei, Liaoning, and even Henan provinces.

The emperors of the Northern Wei conquered and became masters of the whole of North China, with Luoyang (in contemporary Henan Province) as their capital. The histories of these people and their regimes cannot be referred to as parts of Mongolian history, nor as the history of Mongolia, either as a region (i.e., the Mongolian steppes), or as a country. This is why I earlier noted that the title of the series is only more or less accurate.

On the other hand, it is nearly impossible to grasp the history of the Mongolian steppe-region without becoming acquainted with the history of Northern China. Consequently, the history of the Murong and Tabgach cannot be detached from the history of the Mongolian steppes and it is favorable that it is included. However, one must not forget that in the era when the states of the Murong-Xianbei were established, and the Northern Wei was budding under the name of the Kingdom of Dai, more than a dozen similar regimes of "barbarian" origin existed on the soil of Northern China. This era that lasted from 301 to 439 is often referred to as the Sixteen Kingdoms of the Five Barbarians and was a part of China's first great period of fragmentation (the whole period of fragmentation can be dated between 220 and 589) after the collapse of the Han Dynasty.

Apart from the Xianbei states, the Xiongnu (Huns), the Jie, the Di, and the Qiang also established their own ephemeral dynasties. Regrettably, none of these people and regimes are treated (except for a brief mention) in any of the volumes. The first and the third volumes could - and in my opinion should - have included chapters on these.

Similar to the second volume, the fifth volume contains a chapter on the Hyatan/Khitan (a people also from the Xianbei) Liao Dynasty, but does not dedicate one to the Jin of the Jurchen, nor the Xia of the Tangut, not to mention the several dynasties the Shatuo-Turks established in Northern China or the Uighur kingdoms in Qocho (modern Gaochang, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region) and

Ganzhou. These regimes existed during the second period of fragmentation that was brought about by the fall of the Tang Dynasty.

The "Xianbei" volume is the most satisfactory. In the foreword, the author lists the most important Xianbei tribes and other ethnic groups relevant to their history, and tells us which chapters of which Chinese chronicles mention them (pages 12–15). This volume is a concise, well-written history of not only the Xianbei but also their close relatives, the Wuhuan, and the predecessors of both, the Donghu. As mentioned above, this is the only volume that discusses some of the "Sixteen Kingdoms of the Five Barbarians."

One cannot read these volumes without wondering why from the above-mentioned frontier-states, only those established by the Xianbei and their descendants deserve to be parts of the history of Mongolia. One plausible explanation is that these ethnic groups were speakers of Mongolic (more precisely Para-Mongolic) languages and thus are treated by the authors as Mongols, while the founders of other dynasties had different linguistic affiliations (Turkic, Tibetan, and unknown). However, this could hardly be the reason for ignoring the other states, especially because these other states include those of the Xiongnu. In Mongolia, the Xiongnu are generally considered the Mongols' ancestors, and both the leadership and the common people of the country derive great pride from this hypothesized relationship.

The establishment of the Xiongnu Empire is viewed as the beginning of *tulgar tör* 'Mongolian statehood' and its anniversary is celebrated as a national holiday in Mongolia. Yet the Xiongnu dynasties of the fourth and fifth centuries, the Han of Liu Yuan, the Northern Liang of Juqu Mengxun, and the Great Xia of Helian Bobo are left unmentioned. Whatever the reason, the dismissal of these states both from the second and the first era of fragmentation is the most significant shortcoming of the series.

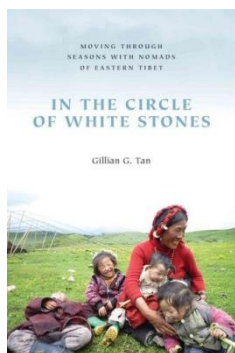
In summary, the series is a reader-friendly set of books featuring elaborate maps and quality illustrations. It gives a detailed, reliable description of the history of a given period, although the region and the groups of people it concerns are not clearly defined. In Mongolia, the series will likely soon appear on the bookshelves of both historians and those interested in history.

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Konchok Gelek (Dkon mchog dge legs དཀོན་མཆོག་དབེ་ལེགས།  
Gengqiu Gelai 更求格来)



•404•

living in a harsh environment, and interacting with a charismatic lama who dedicates his time for improvement of local education. Harrell sees this book as filling some gaps in Westerners' knowledge of Tibet and voicing an alternative narrative of Tibet to that given in newspapers and political articles. The Tibet Tan depicts "[preserves] in print the humanity of the common people of Tibet" (x).

Tan's curiosity about pastoral culture and language is obvious in her reported observations and experiences. The text's articulation of the daily lives of herders and how they are changing within the framework of global change places it outside the genre of travel diary. The author's use of detail could not have been imagined, but only have come from lived experience. As Tan points out, "this book presents two different views of Tibetan life" (xii). One is a portrayal of locals' daily lives, and the other is the author's interactive experience during her stay in this community. Tan conveys relations, perspectives, personalities, and tales of the people of Dora Karmo through conversations and dialogue, helping to bring the book to life, distinguishing characters, and adding value.

However, there are times when Tan's prose leads to excursions that create a text that goes beyond plain description, e.g. (23-24):

For some nomads, a desire for cash is accompanied by transformations in their relationships with entities of the physical environment, including yaks and territorial deities. While these kinds of transformations should not be viewed as "loss," in large part to avoid romantic essentialism regarding "Tibet" and "nomadism," there is some truth to the idea that the desire for cash comes at the expense of the relationships that fuel its creation, echoing Anna Tsing's (2013) point that the power of *other* activities and networks that are not themselves regarded as "capitalistic" and are jeopardized as a result of this power.

This use of academese is unclear to this reviewer, especially in contrast to most other sections of the book that I found clear and straightforward. What exactly, are/were these relationships with local entities? How were they transformed? What are some examples of these *other* activities and networks and how do they relate to the concerns of this book?

Tan presents herself as a foreign, international aid worker and anthropologically inclined researcher who periodically visited the community in the years 2006, 2007, 2010, and 2013 in a quest "to learn more about Tibetan nomad culture and nomad dialect..." (7). The journey begins with exploring the possibilities of living with a local family for a half-year. This becomes possible with the help of a friend and, given the dramatic social changes in the offing, is probably her last opportunity to experience the herding way of life in this particular community.

Her conversations with educated Tibetans illustrate certain attitudes toward change. For example, Tan's friend says:

Tibetan culture has been influenced by external forces for most of history, but we have always had the choice to accept the beneficial things and to reject unnecessary aspects. Now change is happening so quickly that culture is approached from all sides. The people who are making change are not the culture holders. And I think the most important thing we can do is to allow people to think and choose among the new things that are coming into Tibetan society (8).

Tan employs the Tibetan name, Nyima Yangtso, which was given by a Tibetan lama in New York. He also introduced her to Dorje Tashi, an influential, local incarnate lama from Dora Karmo, who plays a significant role in the local community.

Tan recalls her failed attempt to live with a herding family in another county some years earlier due to altitude sickness and loneliness. Regretful about this experience, she resolves to have a more successful experience this time around.

Tan starts her pursuit of learning about local pastoral culture and language down a bumpy dirt road leading to the remote community. Aku Kungo is the head of her host family, which also includes his two daughters, Daka and Padka. The latter is married to Tsering Panjur from a nearby community.

Everything is fresh and new for Tan. This novelty is mutual, as Daka and Padka curiously observe Tan unpack a sleeping bag and headlamp. Though Tan has some Tibetan language background, the nomad dialect proves challenging as she realizes that the Tibetan she

had often heard from educated Tibetans was modified to accommodate her language level. Natural speech in real life, she realizes, is quite different.

Tan insightfully describes her host family's mundane daily activities, including making *tsampa*, fetching water, milking yaks, and collecting dung. She participates in daily chores and assists Padka with herding livestock while learning the names of local mountains and mountain deities.

The rapidly increasing value of caterpillar fungus makes it a major part of a household's income. Tan joins the caterpillar fungus collection group. Although the locals are primarily pastoralists, income from the sale of caterpillar fungus means less dependency on animal husbandry and feeds a desire for new commodities such as mobile phones, motorcycles, and even cars.

Collecting caterpillar fungus also provides opportunities to socialize after the long cold winter months. The caterpillar fungus collection season is a time when livestock are weak after a long, cold winter. There was little dairy work. This was a good time for collectors to leisurely gather on mountains, share information, and gossip.

When the family moved to different camps in the winter, spring, and autumn pastures, they showed concern for the environment. For example, they did not choose the same location to set up their tent two years in a row in order to allow vegetation to recover in that area. Tan's details of helping her host family pack, unpack, and pitch their tent, as well as information on the seasonal moves of neighboring families adds interest and authenticity to her book. The ensuing clusters of black tents resemble giant black spiders on the grassland.

Livestock dictate the nomads' way of life and Tan becomes sufficiently conditioned to the cold, tough environment that she volunteers to milk, graze, churn butter, and make yarn.

Summer is the busiest time of the year. Summer mornings are long and busy. Butter is a vital part of their diet and also acts as an offering to the local monastery. Churning butter alone is a time consuming and daunting task. In the evening, women store freshly-produced chunks of butter in buckets containing cold spring water. A churning machine from Qinghai Province makes this task easier. Nevertheless, mornings remain a very busy time for women. The

afternoons provide women with some time for themselves and the children. It is also a time to visit neighbors and friends for tea and *tsampa*, as well as share news and gossip.

Men collect medicinal herbs, sell animal products, and purchase commodities in town where they obtain the latest news on prices for caterpillar fungus and other local products. At the time of Tan's visit, motorcycles were an important form of transportation, allowing men to travel further, faster, and more frequently. Tan's host family also has a motorcycle, purchased with caterpillar fungus income.

Summer is the best season on the grassland. Horseracing festivals of various sizes are held in Tibetan herding areas. Tourists, both domestic and foreign, visit the grassland to enjoy the natural beauty and cultural events. Tourism brings money-making opportunities, but also detracts from horseracing festivals as a time of community participation and self-entertainment. For example, horseracing festivals in Lhagang and Goroma seem to be performances for tourists. The remote region of Nanglangma, an area adjacent to Dora Karmo, has a horse race without tourists, which retains a semblance of authenticity despite the presence of a few foreigners and development aid workers.

The author observes rapid changes in the lives of herders as the government implements its Xibu Dakaifa 'Develop the West Campaign'. She also observes death and loss of loved ones. Locals have suffered from bloody revenge feuds for generations. Young men fight as the result of misunderstandings, over caterpillar fungus harvest resources, and other unresolved feuds. Violence ignites new revenge feuds. The death and loss of relatives and friends are frequent.

Seasonal changes, moving between camps, and experiencing death and loss emphasize the impermanence of the pastoralists' world. Locals understand the meaning of impermanence well through their own experiences. The reality of their daily lives exemplifies the teaching of Tibetan Buddhism: happiness, suffering - nothing lasts forever.

Padka gives birth to a baby girl who dies before she is six months old. It is painful for Padka to lose her baby. However, she accepts reality, commenting, "We work, we live, we die. Life is like that" (85).

Tan also visits Larung Gar, the largest Buddhist teaching college in Tibet, where she witnesses a sky burial. She describes the process of sky burial in great detail. It exemplifies everyone's final destination - decayed flesh and bone fed to hungry vultures is a reminder of the impermanence of life. Tan's reflections on sky burial give insight into how nomads view life and death. For example, Tan tells a tragic story of an old woman who grieves over the loss of her husband, son, and son-in-law, yet her acceptance of impermanence as reality alleviates her pain in life. This widow believes death is not an end, just a part of a cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

As an aid worker, Gillian pays attention to community development that is initiated by the grassroots philanthropist, Dorje Tashi. A chapter devoted to Dorje Tashi covers topics such as the school enrollment issue, local project objectives, challenges of the new school, community engagement, future vision of Dorje Tashi. His understanding of local people and his role in his community as a religious leader allows him to bring about change, not as a passive recipient, but as an active adaptor to change.

Dorje Tashi, is a charismatic, visionary leader, and an incarnate lama. He established the Xikang Welfare School in 1997, raises funds from his wealthy Han Chinese disciples to serve his community, and builds a new boarding school for Dora Karmo and the adjacent area. After the school is completed, Dorje Tashi holds a grant ceremony. People attend wearing holiday costume. Monks, government officials, and his Chinese disciples are also present. Locals trust this monk with their children and dare to leave them in this isolated boarding school based on that trust. During school registration, children cling to their parents because they do not want to go to school. Both children and parents struggle with their tears. Tan's host family's children are also enrolled.

Dorje Tashi insists on having qualified Tibetan language teachers from Qinghai Province rather than accepting official government teachers who are unqualified. He also devised novel ways of caring for students, such as arranging new students into groups of six and then assigning older students from Xikang Welfare School to care for the younger students in the newly-opened primary school.

Dorje Tashi also understands change and acts on it in his own way: "Change comes, and [other] people will come. We need the methods for [dealing with] it; change comes whether you like it or not" (109). By applying his methods, he is able to expand the new boarding school from 600 students in 2006 to almost 1,400 in 2013. He has even bigger plans for local education and dreams of establishing a university that teaches Tibetan culture and language.

Tan also faces some personal travails. She is hurt and angry when Aku Kungo remarks that she is a Gyamo 'Chinese woman'. Tan uses a Tibetan name and speaks some of the local dialect, yet, the remark alienates her from the others in the tent. I suggest, however, that she overreacted. "Gyamo" is actually a broadly-applied term, for example, it might be used to designate any non-Tibetan woman. A white Western woman might be called Gyamo and in some cases, a fashionably dressed Tibetan woman might also be indicated with the same term.

As a native Tibetan, I find Tan to be insightful and realistic. Unlike some outsiders' perspectives, the author is part of the story, a member of the community, which serves the purpose of this book well. Tan builds personal relationships with locals, e.g., "I was in a domestic relationship with a Tibetan man from Dartsedo" (xii), which makes her a member of a family, a part of the local society. In this sense, she is more local than outsider.

Seven years pass and Tan returns to Dora Karmo to encounter changes that are so great that she feels it is her first visit. Readers will need to read the book to learn what changed in the years that she was absent.

Tan captures the interplay of the topics mentioned above in telling a story of a herding family. Her use of plain English will appeal to a general audience, while those more interested in ethnography and its frameworks may find her occasional use of academese attractive.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *In the Circle of White Stones* and its depiction of the reality of a Tibetan herding way of life, which sent me back to memories of smoky black yak-hair tents, ever-hot adobe stoves, the sounds of cheese-making, and images of resilient Tibetan herders.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS<sup>1</sup>

Aku Kungo, a khu kun go ཨ་ཁུ་ཀུན་གོ།

Daka, zla mkha' ལྷ་མཁའ་།

Dartsedo, dar rtse mdo དར་རྩེ་མདོ།

dkar mdzes དཀར་མཛེས།

Dora Karmo, rdo ra dkar mo ལྷོ་ར་དཀར་མོ།

Dorje Tashi, rdo rje bkra shis ལྷོ་རྩེ་བཀྲ་ཤིས།

Ganzi 甘孜

Goroma, sgo ra ma གོ་ར་མ།

Gyamo, rgya mo རྒྱ་མོ།

lama, bla ma ལྷ་མ།

Larung Gar, bla rung sgar ལྷ་རུང་སྐར།

Lhagang, lha sgang ལྷ་སྐར།

Nanglangama, nangs langs ma རངས་ལངས་མ།

Nyima Yangtso, nyi ma g.yang mtsho ཉི་མ་གཡང་མཚོ།

Padkar, pad dkar པད་དཀར།

Qinghai 青海

Sichuan 四川

Tagong 塔公

tsampa, rtsam pa ལྷ་པ།

Tsering Panjur, tshe ring dpal 'byor ཚེ་རིང་དཔལ་འབྱོར།

Xibu Dakaifa 西部大开发

Xikang 西康

<sup>1</sup> At times, the Tibetan transliterations in the text were unclear, consequently, I have given what I imagined the transliterations alluded to.



# DISSERTATION NOTICE

Reviewed by Benjamin Brosig  
(Academia Sinica)



Erika Sandman. 2016. *A Grammar of Wutun*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki. Doctoral dissertation, xii, 370 p.<sup>2</sup> [<http://bit.ly/2CojMCY>, accessed 13 December 2017]

An occasional problem when doing research on the languages of northern China is that while there are medium-sized structuralist, historical, and contemporary grammars for many local non-Sinitic varieties (e.g., Todaeva 1966, Chen and Cinggeltei 1986, and Fried 2010 for Bonan), the same does not seem to be equally true for their Sinitic contact varieties. *A Grammar of Wutun*, a dissertation written by Erika Sandman at the two departments of World Culture and Modern Languages at the University of Helsinki, helps close this gap for what has since Chen (1981) been known as one of the most idiosyncratic varieties of North-Western Mandarin. This language formed as part of the Amdo Sprachbund in intensive contact with Amdo Tibetan and, to some extent, Qinghai Bonan.

*A Grammar of Wutun* is based on Basic Linguistic Theory (Dixon 1997, 2010) and tends to make use of well-established classics for individual linguistic domains (e.g., Lamprecht 1994 for information structure, Yap et al. 2011 for nominalization). Based on a corpus of approximately 1,300 naturally attested and 1,100 elicited clauses mostly collected by the author herself, it first describes the sociolinguistic and research context (1-18), the phonology (19-41, following Janhunen et al. 2008) and word classes (42-175, nouns, verbs, minor) of Wutun. After attested morphological forms are thus accounted for, it continues by describing functional domains such as aspect (176-205); evidentiality and egophoricity (206-239); clausal word order, valency, and information structure (240-286); clause-

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Brosig, Benjamin. 2018. *A Grammar of Wutun*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:413-418.

<sup>2</sup> <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/168427>, accessed 13 December 2017.

type-related morphological mechanisms for interrogating, ordering, and negating (287-310); and clause connection (311-348). The book closes with glossed and translated transcriptions of three short procedural monologues (349-361).

In the nominal domain, Wutun exhibits an interesting distinction in the plural domain. The suffix *-jhege* can indicate either numbers of approximately 3 to 4 or generic groups (e.g., *lhoma-jhege* 'a few students' / 'students (in general)' when following regular nouns, but it refers to non-collective groups with personal pronouns (*ngu-jhege* 'each of us individually'). It contrasts with *-dera* ~ *-duru* used for delimited groups with regular nouns (*ren-dera* 'the people (e.g., of this country)'), and with *-mu*, denoting collectives when attached to pronouns (*nga-mu* 'we (as a group)'; 48-50, 71-72). Wutun has also developed a case system with a zero nominative and five marked cases. Particularly notable among these are the sociative in *-liangge* which grammaticalized from 'two' (cf. SM *liǎng ge* 'two') (56-61) and the "optional dative" in *-ha* that is used to mark several types of non-actors and functions as a form of differential case marking conditioned by information structure (277-286).

The evidential system is approximately what one would expect for most Tibetic varieties, with the standard division between egophoric, sensory/inferential and factual, and a distinct system for quotative/hearsay. This cannot, however, be said of the relatively complex aspectual system. Sandman analyses it as consisting of two sets of markers, namely primary aspect markers that indicate temporally bounded situations and secondary aspect markers that indicate materially bounded situations (cf. Lindstedt e.g. 2001). The primary aspect markers are perfective *-lio*, progressive-habitual *-di*, patient-oriented resultative *-ma* and "prospective" *-zhe* (which for most ends and purposes seems to act as a form of non-obligatory future marker rather than a prospective in the strict sense of the word, which would indicate a future development as determined by a previous state of affairs). The secondary aspect markers are incompletive *-la*, completive *-gu* and agent-oriented resultative *-she*. These aspect markers can combine into chains of up to three markers, of which the first is always secondary and the last always primary (though secondary aspect markers can occasionally be used on their

own). Among primary aspect markers, the combinations progressive-perfective and perfective-prospective are attested, while among secondary aspect markers, there are the combinations incomplete-completive, agent-oriented resultative-completive and incomplete-agent-oriented resultative. The type of interaction that ensues is nicely illustrated by (1):

- (1) *ngu      gu-ha    dadada      jja-la-gu-llo*  
       1SG    3SG-OD just                meet-INCOMPL-COMPL-PFV  
       'I just visited him/her (the visit lasted for some time, was completed a moment ago and is over now).' (Xiawu Dongzhou) [192]

A problem of this description is that it heavily focuses on overt suffixes and their combinatorics, but only pays limited attention to zero stems (which are attested and used in multiple functions, including future) and the way in which verbal aktionsart might influence the choice of secondary (and, somewhat less crucially for the overall analysis, primary) aspect markers. For instance, Sandman compares (2) and (3), arguing that the form in (2) "denotes terminated, temporary states that do not involve change across time," while the form in (3) "denotes terminated processes that do involve change across time." This is not obvious at all from the glossing of *ddo* as 'think' and *tin* as 'be sick', though *tin* is indeed glossed as 'hurt' and 'get ill' elsewhere (83, 218), suggesting an inceptive aktionsart. Occasional reference to what informants considered impossible might have clarified a lot in this section, but since Sandman relied on no more than three informants throughout, her very sparing use of negative evidence is fully justified.

- (2) *ngu      ni      lai      be-ji-li                      ddo-la-llo*  
       1SG    2SG    come   NEG-reach-SEN-INF        think-INCOMPL-PFV  
       'I thought you will not come in time.' (Xiawu Dongzhou) [191]

- (3) *nga                      tin-di-llo*  
       1SG.OBL            be sick-PROGR-PFV  
       'I was suffering from illness.' (Xiawu Dongzhou) [194]

Sandman (178) notes that "multiple aspect marking systems that resemble the Wutun system seem to be crosslinguistically quite uncommon," though at least for Central Asia and the Amdo region there is an alternative explanation, namely that most descriptions of aspect systems are less extensive than hers. While detailed elicitation on aspect (see e.g., Tatevosov 2002 with a focus on aktionsart or Molochieva 2010 and of course Sandman's own work with a focus on combinatorics) is possible, most regional grammars simply lack sufficient detail on this domain. And while e.g., Santa might indeed exhibit a rather simple aspectual system (cf. Field 1997:188-217), a detailed description of aspect in Eastern Yugur could plausibly reveal a system that is only slightly less complex than Wutun (cf. Nugteren 2003:278-282, Brosig and Skribnik forthcoming:904).

The chapters on clause structure and clause connection mostly detail the expected picture of Turko-Mongolic word order and postpositions, but there is also some dedicated discussion on several morphemes mainly related to information structure. The chapter on interrogation, negation and imperatives, in turn, relates to both clause types and verbal categories. The structural taxonomy of question types in which A-not-A-type questions as a subtype of polar questions is distinguished from alternative questions is very convincing, and the correlation between factual evidentiality and rhetorical questions is quite notable. The negation system is close to Standard Mandarin, though it has started making a distinction between negative copulas and prefixes. The imperative system is described in extreme brevity, but exhibits a number of interesting features, including first person [plural] imperative based on *lai* 'come', third person imperatives from causatives [plus zero] and a marked "familiar" second person imperative which is LESS polite than zero.

Next to describing the language, Sandman also draws comparison to other varieties. She consistently cites forms from standard Mandarin, and occasionally draws comparisons to North-Western Mandarin and its varieties, to Bonan and other Southern Mongolic languages, to Amdo Tibetan, and to Turkic Salar.

Overall, *A Grammar of Wutun*, in this form or another, is bound to become an indispensable resource for all researchers into the languages of the Amdo Sprachbund and a reliable source for any

typologist. Due to its easily accessible style, it might also function as a reference work for native speakers, though English may constitute a significant barrier. It is very much hoped, however, that Sandman will continue her excellent research work on Wutun, especially by widening the material and documentary basis that translate into an even more fine-grained description of usage patterns and functions.

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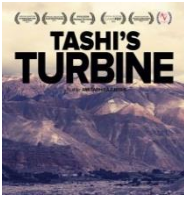
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# FILM REVIEWS



REVIEW: *TASHI'S TURBINE*

Reviewed by Alexander R O'Neill



Amitabh Raj Joshi (director, producer). 2015. *Tashi's Turbine*. New York City, NY: Vacant Light LLC. 56 mins. <http://bit.ly/2tg9fTx>, <sup>2</sup> Nepali and Lowa, English subtitles. Color. (Institutional use 320USD); (personal use 34.95USD).

In the windswept valleys of Upper Mustang, Nepal, renewable energy is transforming lives. Micro-turbine projects have connected off-grid communities with basic electricity, providing hope for sustainable growth on the Roof of the World. The documentary *Tashi's Turbine* follows two friends as they experiment with these technologies in Nyamdok Village, along the Sino-Nepali border. Recognizing that high-mountain valleys, including Mustang, Palpa, and Khumbu, are rich in wind resources, Tashi and his friend, Jeevan Kumar Oli, attempt to mitigate poverty using grassroots energy.

Tashi Bista was inspired in his youth by tales of "wind machines" at Kagbeni Village in Upper Mustang. In 1987, the Danish Government had funded a twenty-kilowatt turbine in the area; but, it was rapidly decommissioned due to maintenance complications. In 1996, the Government of Nepal established the Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC) to revive this and other wind programs and address related challenges. Nevertheless, AEPC's latest Wind Energy Resource Assessment revealed two decades of inaction. Wind programs in other parts of the country remain nascent; much of Central and Western Nepal have yet to be connected to the national grid.

Director and cinematographer Amitabh Raj Joshi cultivates a nuanced vision of these developments by juxtaposing majestic landscapes against simple homes and everyday struggles for existence.

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O'Neill, Alexander R. 2018. Review: *Tashi's Turbine*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:420-421.

<sup>2</sup> Accessed 27 June 2017.

The film opens with panoramas of the sapphire skies and canvas valleys of Mustang. Minutes later, kerosene fixtures illuminate paltry yields from subsistence harvests; children attempt to study under candlelight, often to no avail. Voicing the narratives of villagers like Chhimi Lhamo, Karma Lutok, and Pemba Tashi, Joshi captures an ongoing, critical discourse within local communities about energy. Originally from Kathmandu, Amitabh has received several prestigious awards for exploring the intersection of sustainability and identity worldwide, including the Princess Grace JustFilms Grant (2012), The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation Grant (2013), and the Center for Asian-American Media Documentary Fund (2014).

*Tashi's Turbine* is a valuable and light-hearted addition to the study of environment and society in South Asia. Most notably, it is a distinct pivot away from the dominant discourses of energy and hydropower which typically portray themes of relocation, damage, and loss. This film is not only inspirational, but also demonstrates the practical outcomes of grassroots action in Nepal. Outreach by people like Tashi and Jeevan can enhance the efficacy of NGOs by situating development projects within local contexts. Going forward, decentralized micro-grids may be a temporary solution to the energy demands in the Himalayas. My only criticism of the film is that its Nepali to English language translations are quite truncated. This does not necessarily disrupt the flow of dialogue, or the central message of the film.

By December 2017, Nepal will complete the thirteenth iteration of its three-year development plan. It has endeavored to connect eighty-seven percent of households with electricity and make all homes smoke-free. Clearly, these lofty goals will not reach Nyamdok by that time, even with AEPC advocating sustainable energy. *Tashi's Turbine* remains a poignant reminder of communities who have not and will not receive the benefits of state programs for years to come.

REVIEW: *MADE IN BHUTAN*

Reviewed by Alexander R O'Neill



Hirondelle Chatelard (director, producer). 2013. *Made in Bhutan*. Thimpu: The Loden Foundation. 33 mins. <http://bit.ly/2ucz5EM>. Color.

With the new idea, it's not necessary that you have to forgo or forget your old tradition. You can have your old tradition, you can practice whatever you've been doing all along, and at the same time be open to new ideas and new thinking that new people bring in. - Nawang Tshering, *The Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs*

Bhutan, well recognized for its Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index, has pursued growth strategies that integrate heritage preservation with UN Sustainable Development Goals. Buttressed by isolationist policies, however, its efforts have resulted in both a lagging national economy and rampant youth unemployment. *Made in Bhutan* is a short documentary that highlights local responses to these conditions since 2010. Set in the capital, Thimphu, it follows Bhutanese entrepreneurs as they navigate private sector ventures with potential for social impact.

The film opens with a discussion of market liberalization in the Eastern Himalayas. For centuries, kings dictated Bhutan's economy with absolute authority; civil service was a common career path for many Bhutanese. In modern times, regional markets and population expansion have placed significant stress on these ancient institutions. Rural poverty, substance abuse, and rampant unemployment threaten the heritage of this Himalayan state. *Made in Bhutan* is refreshingly candid about many of these issues, even though it provides but cursory context for its economic woes.

Karma Phunthsho, Founder of The Loden Foundation, comments on some of these challenges:

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O'Neill, Alexander R. 2018. Review: *Made in Bhutan*. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 51:422-423.

There are many villages around here, in Western Bhutan, that are nearly vacant because children come to live in Thimpu and work in Thimphu. Parents then follow their children to live in Thimpu. As a result, we rely more on India for these products and for the commodities that we consume daily. And with that, there is also a lot of cultural heritage being lost.

The Loden Foundation, Bhutan's first registered charity, has taken the helm in promoting a new wave of entrepreneurship in the Buddhist kingdom. Since 2008, the NGO has funded over sixty businesspeople with interest-free seed money to start their own companies. These efforts have reinvigorated the private sector, and generated hundreds of employment opportunities across the country. Some surveyed programs include an incense factory run from a monastery, a waste management and recycling center, and tire upcycling and sale center.

With nearly half of the population under twenty-five (48.9 percent), the Royal Government of Bhutan hopes that future generations will continue integrating Bhutanese heritage into global markets. "Economic growth is important for GNH," says Tshering Tobgay, the Prime Minister of Bhutan. "GNH is simply a reminder that economic growth is not the only goal. It is not the be all end all of a nation's objective."

Prime Minister Tobgay's message is a central theme of this documentary. It recognizes that many factors are driving social change in Bhutan as it diverges from the pervasive image of the country as a monastic time capsule. Here, it is portrayed as a dynamic nation on the brink of modernity - a place where the government cannot address development challenges alone.

The film would have benefitted from a more robust discussion of Bhutan's economy, and quantitative vignettes on capital earned from surveyed businesses. Many of the projects appear quite niche and aimed solely at domestic sales or tourist markets.

Overall, the documentary will interest development workers, or those interested in modern Bhutan. Its inspirational tone and length also make it suitable for course material.